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HINTON'S

THEOLOGICAL WORKS

IN SIX VOLUMES.

THE

THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF THE REV.

JOHN HOWARD HINTON, M.A.

In Six Volumes.

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LONDON:
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1864.

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GENERAL PREFACE.

It will not be thought unnatural that the publication of a new and complete edition of my Theological Works should be an occurrence deeply interesting to me. Solemn as is the position of one who undertakes to speak for God in the ears of his fellow-men, far more so (in my judgment) is that of one who undertakes to treat in writing "the deep things of God," especially when, as in my own case, the labour has been expended chiefly in an argumentative discussion of the great verities of the Gospel. What has been spoken can have wrought but upon a few, for only a few have heard it, and it may have been speedily forgotten; but what has been written may perhaps have had a much wider circulation, and it still remains to speak more or less extensively to the generations to come.

When, under the impulse of a suggestion made to me from several—I may say from many—quarters, I began to collect my theological writings with a view to their republication, I was greatly surprised to find how voluminous an author I had become; not that I had ever published a large work, but that the production of successive works during a period of nearly forty years had unawares constituted so large an amount of literary matter. And I have not been a writer whose works have fallen still-born from the press. Although, of course, far from reaching the circulation eagerly awarded to a "sensation novel," my books, which have appealed to the intelligent and the thoughtful, have been read and prized by a sufficient number of them to make me at once thankful and hopeful.

Of the works now to be presented to the public, a considerable number are devoted, more or less directly, to the development and vindication of the system of evangelical doctrine known as Moderate Calvinism. Such are those which occupy the present volume: Theology, or an Attempt towards a Consistent View of the Whole Counsel of God; the Harmony of Religious Truth and Human Reason—a work which, long out of print but frequently asked for, I have particular pleasure in again placing in the hands of my readers; and a Treatise on Man's Responsibility. Of the same kind is the book with which the second volume will open—On the Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion; and with them may be classed the three small volumes of Lectures more recently published—on Acquaintance with God, on the Moral Government of God, and on Redemption.

My theological writings, however, cover a much wider ground than this. Among them is a work on a totally different subject—Athanasia, or Four Books on Immortality; one on Inspiration; and another of a strictly expository kind—An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans on the principles of Scripture Parallelism. In addition to these may be mentioned several works of a practical kind, the principal of which are entitled Individual Effort and the Active Christian; together with a considerable number of Tracts, and Sermons published and unpublished. In the succeeding volumes these will appear under the several heads of Systematic Divinity, Exposition, Controversy, Practical Divinity, and Sermons; the volumes being completed as occasion may require by a selection of minor pieces on subjects contributed to the Religious Periodicals of the day.

May God, to whose service this feeble contribution is gratefully rendered as one of the latest efforts of a long life through his grace devoted to his service, and not unblest, accept it graciously through Christ Jesus! Amen.

London, *June* 1, 1864.

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THEOLOGY.

THEOLOGY

OR

AN ATTEMPT TOWARDS A CONSISTENT VIEW OF THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

WITH

A PRELIMINARY ESSAY

ON

THE PRACTICABILITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THIS ATTAINMENT.

AND AN APPENDIX CONTAINING

A REJOINDER TO MR. J. A. HALDANE,

OF EDINBURGH.

"The glorious Gospel of the blessed God."—PAUL.

"Though some of these things be difficult, yet it is very unworthy of a Christian not to take some pains to understand what God, if I may be allowed so to speak, took so much pains to contrive."—BISHOP HOPKINS.

PREFACE TO THEOLOGY.

THIS, although my first and almost my shortest work on a theological subject, is in this respect at least the most important, that it is in its scope the most comprehensive. It is, as the title expresses it, "An Attempt towards a Consistent View of the Whole Counsel of God." It is in this work also that I have gone minutely over what I may justly call the most difficult ground, namely, the scriptural narrative of the transactions in Eden. In treating of these, one of the most important questions which arises relates to the interpretation of the Divine threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thou shalt die." I refer particularly to the phrase "*In the day;*" a phrase which I have interpreted of a literal day of twenty-four hours. On this point I am aware that some of my readers for whose judgment I have great respect have found it hard to agree with me; and one of my reviewers,* justly describing it as the pivot of my entire theory, thus strenuously impugns it:—

"Mr. H. thus argues: The word *day* cannot here mean 'a continuous period,' because there is nothing in the context to indicate this meaning, and it may be laid down as a rule that the phrase '*in the day*' never bears that meaning unless the context so fixes it. In reply we assert, first, that the phrase *always* bears that meaning unless the context limits it to a literal day of twenty-four hours—in other words, that the former is its prevailing meaning and the latter the exception. A common Concordance will at once show whether or not the word *day* is not in vastly preponderating instances used to denote an indefinite period; and also that, when a particular day of twenty-four hours is evidently intended, the phrase is generally, if not always, varied to '*that* day,' or 'the self-same day,' as in Gen. vii. 11–13; or contains the addition of some one of the ordinal numbers, as 'the *first* day,' 'the *fourteenth* day,' &c. In the second place we reply, that in the passage under consideration the context *does* indicate that a continuous period was intended. The context

* In the "Gospel Herald."

speaks of Adam's henceforth eating his bread in the sweat of his brow, and at length returning to the dust from which he was originally formed. How then could the threatening intend the extinction of being in the literal day of twenty-four hours when the sentence was incurred?"

I shall devote the few pages here at my disposal to an examination of this passage.

There is here a show of reasoning, but nothing can be more inconclusive. To my assertion that the Hebrew phrase "in the day" never bears the meaning of a continuous or indefinite period unless the context so fixes it, the reviewer gives a direct negative; he affirms that, on the contrary, "the phrase *always* bears that meaning unless the context limits it to a literal day of twenty-four hours." As he adds something to this sentence, however, more fully to explain himself, it will be fair to give him the advantage of it: "In other words," says he, "that the former is its prevailing meaning, and the latter the exception." Now this explanation at once shows that he totally misunderstands the subject under consideration. The question is not as to the "prevailing" and the "exceptional" meaning of the phrase "in the day," but of its primary and secondary meaning. Of this elementary matter in criticism, the distinction between the primary and secondary meanings of words, the reviewer has apparently no conception; he thinks only of the *number of times* a given word may be used in one sense or another. Accordingly he goes to a "common Concordance" — his Cruden, no doubt—and finds that the word *day* is, "in vastly preponderating instances, used to denote an indefinite period." Why, this is true; but what is it to the point? What the reviewer has to show is that the word *day* means an indefinite period when the context contains nothing to indicate it, and towards this he has not made the slightest attempt. In truth, if he will look at his Concordance again he will see that, in all these numerous cases which have so greatly delighted him, there *is* something in the context to indicate that the word *day* means an indefinite period; as, for example, "in the day *of my calamity*"—"in the day *of his wrath*." How, indeed, if it were not so, should he become acquainted with the fact?

The number of times that a word is used, however, clearly proves nothing as to the meaning of it, even if it were used

a hundred thousand times in one sense, and only once in another. Whenever a word is used in two senses, one of them is invariably found to be an extension or modification of the other, the meaning which is literal being called the primary and the modified meaning being called the secondary meaning of the word; and the rule of interpretation is that whenever such a word stands by itself it is to be taken in its literal or primary signification, and in its secondary one only when there is something in the context to indicate it.

The rule thus laid down, let us take up the word *day*, which we find to be scripturally used in two senses—on the one hand for a definite period of twelve or twenty-four hours, and on the other for a period of time altogether indefinite—and ask which of these is its primary and which its secondary meaning. To say nothing of what is obvious on the face of the question—that the indefinite meaning must be an extension of the definite one, and therefore the secondary—a reference to Johnson's Dictionary settles the question in the following manner:—

DAY: 1. The time between the rising and setting of the sun, called the artificial day.
2. The time from noon to noon, called the natural day.
3. Any time specified and distinguished from any other time.

These definitions are adopted by Cruden. Indeed, in this matter the reviewer may learn from himself; for he says that the word *day* "always means an indefinite period unless the context limits it to a *literal day* of twenty-four hours." A day of twenty-four hours is then, according to the reviewer himself, "a literal day," or a day in the literal, or primary, meaning of the word: it is consequently the true and necessary meaning of the word when it stands alone, and apart from any modifying context.

The reviewer's assertion that the word *day* "always means an indefinite period unless the context limits it to a literal day of twenty-four hours," is one of the boldest I ever met with, especially as sustained by a reference to a "common Concordance." On opening Cruden at the word DAY, the reader will immediately find that it is utterly false in fact, and contradicted by every reference. It would have been easy, if it had been true, to have given an example of it, which, however, the reviewer has not done.

Equally unfounded is his assertion that, "when a particular day of twenty-four hours is evidently intended, the phrase is generally, if not always, varied to 'that day,' or 'the self-same day;' or contains the addition of some one of the ordinal numbers, as 'the first day,' 'the fourteenth day,' &c." That such combinations as these with the word *day* are frequent in Scripture is quite true, but I venture to affirm that the object of them is not in a single instance to limit the meaning of the word to a literal day of twenty-four hours. The expanded phrase has always its own meaning apart from any such purpose as this, for which the word itself is perfectly sufficient. The reviewer, however, cautiously admits that such combinations do not *always* occur "where a particular day of twenty-four hours is evidently intended:" by what means, then, except the necessary meaning of the word, is this intention in these cases made apparent?

Consciously insecure perhaps, the reviewer at length shifts his ground. He tells us that, "in the passage under consideration, the context *does* indicate that a continuous period was intended. The context speaks of Adam's henceforth eating his bread in the sweat of his brow, and at length returning to the dust of which he was originally formed. How then could the threatening intend an extinction of being in the literal day of twenty-four hours?"

To this my reply is twofold. In the first place, the annunciation that Adam should eat bread in the sweat of his brow cannot justly be said to be in "the context" of the threatening; the latter being in Gen. ii. 17 and the former in Gen. iii. 19, very important events having taken place in the interim. In the second place, no difficulty whatever exists on the supposition that, through some intervention of divine mercy, the threatening may have been superseded, and its infliction have been prevented. That the reviewer *does not like* this supposition I know, and he confesses; but this is no argument against its truth.

THEOLOGY.

PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

Several years ago, the conductors of the Oxford Encyclopædia requested me to prepare for that work an article on Theology. I undertook the task, and thus formed the basis of the volume now submitted to the public eye. I have taken the opportunity which the reprint has afforded me to amplify particular portions, and to revise the whole; but there appeared no sufficient inducement to alter the general form of the piece, which retains, therefore, its original character.

I once entertained the idea of presenting an abstract of the principal theological systems, and of the arguments by which they are usually supported; but, upon entering into the subject more deeply, it seemed preferable to devote so small a space rather to an explanatory statement than to polemical discussion, rather to an exhibition of truth than to an array of multifarious errors. The attempt was both interesting and profitable. It was not that I fancied myself to arrive at novel sentiments, or to achieve anything important in controversy; but that I obtained a sort of bird's-eye view of the expanse of divine truth,—a view combining the invaluable properties of comprehensiveness and unity. Perhaps not a single idea has passed through my mind which may not have been derived from one or another of the authors whom I have consulted; but I have nowhere found the whole of them in connexion. The parts of the structure which I have employed myself in framing lie scattered in various directions in the field of theological research or debate, a circumstance by which they lose much of their beauty and utility. My pretensions are simply those of selection and arrangement. Without either aiming at the

establishment of any of the great truths of Christianity, or travelling far on disputed ground, I have endeavoured to select the views which to my own mind were most satisfactory, and so to arrange them that each may occupy its proper place, and exhibit its true relations. It has been, in a word, an exercise in the theory of the divine ways, an excursion into the philosophy of religious truth, an attempt towards a consistent view of "the whole counsel of God."

Whether I have accomplished anything creditable to myself, or conducive to the good of others, it is irrelevant here to inquire; but I beg leave to offer a few remarks on the practicability and importance of the attainment after which I have aspired.

I am far from writing in a spirit of accusation, or from wishing to insinuate that no persons have hitherto attained consistent views of divine truth. The contrary is doubtless the case. But it is an acknowledged fact, that the theory of religion comprehends great difficulties, which all divines have painfully felt, and which it has been their main endeavour to remove. Their aim in this respect has been most wise and important. The ways of God towards mankind are to us the most interesting of all topics, and it is impossible for a well constituted mind to be otherwise than pained by an appearance of contrariety in them. To discern their consistency one with another, and with our best conceptions of infinite wisdom and excellence, cannot but be anxiously desired by every friend of God.

It is true, indeed, that some of the problems arising in this department of knowledge are far too vast and profound for our present faculties, and that our Maker both requires and deserves a cheerful acquiescence in the mysterious portions of his conduct. Nor am I unwilling to obey. "Secret things belong to God;" and whenever he says, "Thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this matter," I trust I shall be enabled to reply, "So be it, O Lord." But at this point I think a stand ought to be made. If "secret things belong to God," "things which are revealed belong to us and to our children." If there are portions of his ways respecting which he bids us be silent, as it respects others he encourages us to be inquisitive. While he withdraws some of his operations from our view, he discloses the rest for the exercise of the understanding and the heart. The admitted fact that

some things cannot be searched out, affords no valid reason for neglecting what may be investigated. Submission to unexplained conduct is neither obligatory nor pleasurable in itself, but the reverse; and, although it becomes a duty when enjoined by the Most High, and a pleasure when associated with honourable views of his character, no further than this can it partake of the nature of either. We may allow such shades to rest upon his ways as the ever blessed God himself casts upon them; but to allow those to remain which he has enabled us to disperse, can be neither pleasing to him nor beneficial to ourselves. If we ought in the former case willingly to abandon inquiry, in the latter we ought eagerly to pursue it. It is material, therefore, to ascertain what is secret and what revealed; in order that, while, on the one hand, we avoid offensive intrusion, we may not, on the other, incur the charge of criminal neglect.

If some rash and adventurous spirits have pushed their inquiries too far, in me they find no apologist. It may be affirmed, however, that in a much greater number of instances investigation stops very short of its prescribed limits. What these limits are it were hazardous generally to define; but I will venture to suggest the probability (and this is all that my present purpose requires), that NOTHING IS DESIGNED TO BE WITHHELD FROM US WHICH IS NECESSARY TO A CONSISTENT VIEW OF THE REVEALED WAYS OF GOD. As this principle may be questioned, I will submit to the reader some of the observations which seem to me to support it.

Statements are consistent which are not contradictory; and our view of the declarations made to us respecting the character and ways of God is consistent, when we understand each of them in such a sense as not to contradict any other, but so as to admit the meaning and the force of all. We are involved in inconsistency, when we hold one doctrine in such a manner as to call in question the truth, or to counteract the influence, of another.

It is obvious that the desire after such a view of things revealed is wholly compatible with an acknowledgment that some things are not revealed, and with an entire acquiescence in their concealment. There may be many points on which nothing is communicated, and many questions to which no answer can be obtained; but we contemplate solely things which are revealed. And the idea we suggest is, that the

revelation itself does not contain contradictions, or any assertions from which contradictions can justly be deduced; but that, on the contrary, it is so framed as to enable a sincere and judicious inquirer to interpret every declaration, at once with a due regard to the meaning and force of the language employed, and in harmonious combination with all other parts of the record.

The sentiment thus stated seems to plead strongly for itself, and it may be supported by a reference to the holy and blessed Being from whom the Scriptures are derived. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and, when the Maker of all things becomes an author, it is to be expected that the volume shall be worthy of him. Few things can be more derogatory to a book than contradictoriness. Such a fault would inevitably affect the intellectual, and might impugn the moral, character of the writer; it would prove him, at all events, incompetent to instruct, and unworthy of confidence. No approximation to such characteristics, of course, can be supposed for a moment to attach to the all-wise God; but the only way of avoiding such a conclusion is to deny the premises, and to maintain that his communications are not contradictory.

To this it may be added, that a contradictory revelation must be proportionately useless and mischievous. The directions and the hopes derived from one part of it might be cancelled by another, and the perplexities of our condition be multiplied by the professed kindness of our guide. It is quite inconceivable that the light which heavenly pity has shed upon this dark world should be so uncertain and delusive as to become an aggravation of its darkness; that the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace, should trifle with the wretchedness of the perishing whom he has professed to compassionate; and that the awful destinies of an eternal world should be suspended upon declarations contradicting each other, and, therefore, neither inspiring confidence nor imparting knowledge. Nor would such a revelation be less embarrassing to its author than useless and afflictive to us. The word which he has made our directory now, he intends hereafter to adopt as his own; and, if it be contradictory, "how shall God judge the world?"

It would be the more extraordinary that such a thing should have happened, because divine communications are

altogether voluntary. The Almighty has revealed only such things as he thought good. Some he has withheld. If he had pleased, he might have withheld more; and surely, if anything in existence were contradictory to what he had already made known, this, above all things, he would have concealed.

It is not conceivable that the Father of lights should be under the necessity of occasioning embarrassment upon any subject; and it is much less so, that he should gratuitously place us in the midst of contradictions respecting questions of the deepest and most awful concern.

But I have said, perhaps, more than the subject demands, and may hope to carry my readers with me in the sentiment, that the Sacred Scriptures contain nothing of which we may not expect to acquire consistent views; that, instead of its being a presumptuous aspiration, or an impertinent intrusion, it is a privilege to which we are welcome, nay, a duty which is binding on us, to pursue our investigation till we understand all that God has revealed, and every part in consistency with the whole.

If I have been anxious to establish this principle beyond dispute, it is because I wish it to be effectively applied. We have a consistent Bible: but are Christians, or even ministers, generally, consistent divines? I was very much struck on reading, a year or two ago, in one of the most respectable and influential of the religious periodicals,* an avowal from an apparently excellent clergyman, that he had altogether abandoned the idea of being consistent in his ministry. I never met with a similar declaration in any other quarter, and I fervently hope that the writer is really solitary in his resolution; but he is assuredly not the only person who has found it difficult to be consistent, and probably not the only one who has actually failed of being so. There are, it may be feared, too many by whom the philosophy of religious truth is never closely investigated, and by whom the difficulties of it are never grappled with; and many more who give up the attempt in despair, and content themselves with evasion where they ought to be able to explain.

I trust that, in making these observations, I shall not be accused of censoriousness. I wish not to depreciate my brethren,

* The Christian Observer.

among whom I am conscious of holding but a very humble place, but to stimulate them. In very truth, for a private Christian, but much more for a public instructor, to have correct views of divine things is a matter of great importance. If it be of the highest moment that the Bible which is to guide us should be consistent, it cannot be less so that our views of it should be consistent too; for these, in fact, constitute our Bible, and by these alone can our character be formed. The harmony of revelation is useless to us, if we do not derive from it harmonious ideas. And the importance of this attainment is unspeakably augmented when our sentiments are to be uttered from the place of sacred instruction. Then we act as ambassadors for God, and the people expect to hear from us what the Lord shall speak. Of what infinite consequence is it to speak as the oracles of God! What anxiety ought we not to cherish, lest we should convey any thought not in accordance with his mind, or should fail to exhibit the whole of his counsel, on any of the great subjects of eternal interest to mankind!

It has appeared to me that the prevailing tone of religious opinion presents several indications of a defective and inconsistent divinity. The truths of theology are referable to two principal subjects, namely, the agency of man, and the dispensations of God. In the character of man it appears scripturally important to assert both total depravity and just responsibility; and, in the ways of God, both universal equity and discriminating grace. Every reflecting man, however, knows that the dependencies of these principles cannot be traced far without appearing to clash, and that the grand problem in theology is to hold both these classes of truths consistently, or in such a sense as shall do injury to neither, but justice to both. After the preceding observations, it is needless to say that I think it may be done; and some of the readers who may favour this little volume with an attentive perusal will, I hope, come to the same conclusion. It appears, however, that there are persons who imagine it cannot be effected, and others who are not acquainted with the means of achieving it. We find some, for example, of opinion that the total corruption of man is destructive of his responsibility; and hence they contend, either for his partial rectitude, or for the necessary justice of his receiving the Spirit, or for his being beyond the reach of

command, at all events without the promise of supernatural aid. Some imagine that, as Christ died for his church, none else can have any benefit from his death, and either refuse to invite men generally to believe in him, or justify themselves in doing so on very equivocal grounds; while others advocate the salvability of all men, to the abandonment of the vicarious nature of the atoning sacrifice. Some regard the exercise of electing love as consigning the remnant to perdition, and others maintain the universality of redemption to the rejection of discriminating grace. Some dwell on the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence as though it released mankind from duty; and others upon equitable obligation as though it vacated the office of the Spirit. But it were almost endless to enumerate the multifarious modes of address which are used in the pulpit, and which afford, in many instances, clear indications of the embarrassment under which preachers labour respecting the grand problem we have specified.

Nor is this all. The divines who have attempted to grapple with the difficulty, and to acquire systematic views, have, for the most part, egregiously failed. The principal result of their labours has been, not to unite the two classes of truths, but to divide them, and to contend for each on principles destructive of the other. On the one hand, we have strong advocates for the responsibility of man and the equity of moral probation, driven to the denial of total depravity and discriminating grace; and on the other, supporters equally warm of the latter doctrines compelled to the abandonment of the former. This has been the besetting snare both of the Calvinistic and the Arminian divines; and so completely have they fallen into it, that, by many persons, the very possibility of combining these important sentiments is resolutely questioned, while any man who professes to do so is regarded as a theoretical wonder, and immediately accused of contradicting himself. Such has been, in a great measure, the fate of the few writers, though of no mean eminence, who have adopted this course, and it is often the lot of the preachers who tread in their steps.

How much might be adduced in extenuation by a reference to the limited nature of human intellect, I know not; but much could scarcely be said on this point, without impugning the excellency of the divine oracles, which it behoved

their blessed Author, above all things, to adapt to the understanding of mankind. It is, at all events, unquestionable, that such a state of things is greatly to be lamented. How can it be otherwise with respect to truth itself, the fair and heavenly form of which is grievously disfigured, and its very substance mangled and rent in pieces? Changing the figure, we may say, that materials have been supplied for the construction of a temple worthy of her glory, but that the builders who should have reared it, under the imagination that they were not all adapted to one edifice, have divided them, and erected two. Each party is assiduously wooing her acknowledgment and residence. But what can she say? She beholds some of her own elements in both; but, alas! dissevered by unskilful workmanship from their kindred doctrines, and appearing only like noble fragments, magnificent in ruin. She can neither totally disown, nor cordially acknowledge; but seems at once to reprove the blindness of the past, and to await the efforts of the future.

But it is not to mere matter of theory that we can limit our regret. Truth was intended to exercise a practical influence; and the sentiments we entertain, whether true or false, really do so. The operation of a defective divinity, as we have shown already, is discernible in the preaching of the Gospel, unspeakably the most important of all the directions in which it can be felt. The ministry of the Divine Word is the grand means by which the kingdom of God among men is to be advanced, and its efficacy may be expected to bear a proportion to the fidelity with which the Sacred Oracles are represented. Besides which, it is obvious that the adaptation of an address to convince and to persuade may be greatly modified by doctrinal views. There is a kind of preaching, too, which more eminently honours God, and which, therefore, he may be expected more abundantly to honour. And the influence which is felt in the pulpit emanates from it. The pulpit is the main guide of religious opinion, it gives the tone to religious feeling, and the tendency of defective preaching may be traced in the character of both. So far as observation enables me to form a judgment, there appears to have resulted from the defectiveness of Arminian preachers a too easy confidence in the efficacy of moral means; and from that of Calvinistic preachers a mischievous hesitation concerning human responsibility. I fear these deficiencies of preaching have done

much to diminish and counteract the usefulness of this ordinance of God.

In reply to these remarks, it may be said that abstruse points and metaphysical subtleties are not adapted for the popular ear. I admit it. But I wonder greatly that it should be said in this connection. Is it, then, to be understood, that the grounds of our responsibility are so perplexed with metaphysical subtleties, that a plain man can have no hope of comprehending them? If there is any fact which affects the destiny, and should affect the conduct of man, more than others, it is this. If there is any topic which it behoves him to see more clearly, and to feel more deeply than others, it is this. If there is any truth which it might be supposed our Maker should have rendered more obvious and more convincing than others, it is this. For it is the basis of his proceedings towards us; and, as realized by us, it creates our entire accessibility to his dispensations. A single doubt attaching to this, renders doubtful every other part of the moral system. Let the slightest shade rest here, and all is proportionate darkness. If the conviction of this truth be enfeebled, the foundation-stone is loosened, and the whole moral structure totters to its fall.

I feel myself justified, therefore, in saying, that it would be beyond measure surprising if the grounds of human responsibility were difficult of comprehension. Nor can I hesitate to go further, and to affirm that they are not so. The subject has been most needlessly perplexed. It requires nothing but a determined prosecution of the question, What constitutes just responsibility? to arrive at a satisfactory answer to it. It is by no means difficult, as a problem in the study of the moral powers; it is capable of easy and decisive illustration from the course of human affairs; the testimony of Holy Writ concerning it is most ample and unequivocal; and conscience, as a faithful witness, will confirm the whole.

As for the few explanations which may be necessary in presenting such a topic to a general audience, there is little reason to fear their being well understood. Notwithstanding the force with which nature testifies to the contrary, men receive with marvellous facility such doctrinal statements as tend to exonerate them from crimination and from duty; and why should they be less able to comprehend truth than error?

Those are the subtleties which afford shelter to the heart in its search after refuges of lies; the declarations which would destroy them are plain, convincing, and commanding.

I have often thought, indeed, that men gain from a perverted system of theology, a sanction for neglect and iniquity which never could have been derived from any other quarter, and which, perhaps, never obtains the acquiescence of their own consciences. When we would convict them of doing evil, they say, You have told us we cannot do well. When we urge them to penitence, they reply, You have told us we cannot repent. They know, probably, that there is no validity in these objections; but, as they are drawn from our own discourses, they avail to silence us, which, perhaps, is all that they desire. Or, if they go further, and lull themselves into the practical belief of this fallacy, it is upon our authority that they repose in doing so; and we have thus the aggravated affliction, not only, by an unskilful use of the armour of God, to fail in our assault, but to put into their hands a fatal weapon, by which they at once repel us, and destroy themselves.

It has sometimes been alleged, that it is enough to adopt right opinions on the leading points of theology, without attempting to harmonize them; to assert, for example, the total depravity and just responsibility of man, though quite at a loss to explain their consistency. Allowing this to be better than the denial or abandonment of any truth, it nevertheless involves a very serious defect. In such a case, the sentiments apparently, and perhaps really held, cannot exercise their proper influence upon the holder himself; and he will, therefore, be proportionately disqualified for applying them to others. Besides which, our mode of representing truth will correspond with our method of holding it; and we shall inevitably communicate views as defective as our own. If we are content to maintain sentiments without seeing their consistency, we run great hazard of entertaining ideas which are not consistent in reality, and of employing the phraseology of truth in an erroneous sense. We shall be subject, at one time, so to urge responsibility and duty as to lessen the importance of Divine aid, and, at another, so to insist on the influence of the Spirit as to undermine the sense of obligation and blame: or, when expatiating on the

hope of salvation held out to all men, we shall be liable to dishonour the Divine sovereignty, and, when extolling discriminating grace, to obscure universal equity. The departments of truth, like the provinces of an empire, are both limited and defined by each other; and none can be accurately known but by ascertaining those by which it is surrounded. Add to this, that a preacher cannot always confine himself to assertion, but must sometimes descend to explanation and proof; and this will almost inevitably bring such a man into difficulties, if not into contradictions. Either by embracing untenable positions, or by involving unwelcome conclusions—by illusion in the use of words, or by palpable evasions indicating his own perplexity, his explanations can scarcely fail of being unsatisfactory, and his arguments unconvincing.

And what must be the influence of such discourses? As the hearers cannot be supposed to rise above their teacher, the religious knowledge and character of the flock will be proportionably defective in vigour and consistency. There may be expected also to result (to a great extent, it may be feared, there has resulted) a general impression among ungodly men, that religious doctrine is essentially void of reasonableness. On however slight a pretext, they thus encourage themselves to believe that it will not bear the test of argument. They set it down as involving the infatuation of all who come under its influence, or, perhaps, as a deliberate attempt to impose upon the credulity of mankind. So far from yielding to it, they justify themselves in turning it aside with contempt, and even fancy themselves called upon to do so by a regard to soundness of intellect, identifying the rejection of the Gospel with the vindication of their rational powers.

Most truly, indeed, is it affirmed, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But as this, on the one hand, does not make the fact of his blindness less justly matter of regret, so neither, on the other, does it meet the point under consideration. The complaint is, that men should find a reasonable objection to religion; that they should be repelled, or impeded, by the just use of their intellectual faculties. It cannot be supposed that this arises out

of the nature of religious truth, or the manner in which God has communicated it; since his Word is, essentially and exclusively, an appeal to the intelligent nature of man. It has no other adaptation than to our rational powers. It can act in no other way than by calling them into exercise, and no further than it does so. If, in doing so, it presents to the severest examination any contradictions, or any statements which can, by just reasoning, be pushed to contradictory issues, it cannot be pronounced worthy, either of its author or of its design. And what it has to fear, in fact, is not argument, but sophistry; not sound, but fallacious reasoning. The true system of religious doctrine is perfectly and absolutely rational. Though it contains many things superior to reason, it presents nothing contrary to it; a fact of pre-eminent importance, because it establishes the criminality of men in the neglect of the Gospel, and leaves them without excuse. And if such has been the wise, holy, and glorious aim of God, such also should be the aim of his representatives in the world. Without being metaphysical or philosophical, the discourses of the pulpit should be such as neither philosophy nor metaphysics can impugn. Our statements should be consistent with each other, and with every sound principle; so that the acutest caviller may find himself at fault for a valid objection, and be convicted of the operation of a dishonest heart. The importance of attaining this end is unspeakable. It is only thus that we can do justice to God, to our hearers, or to ourselves; or indeed, that we can avoid inflicting a grievous dishonour and injury upon all.

Nor needs this most happy result to be despaired of, in an humble, devout, and persevering study of the Holy Scriptures, which are "given by inspiration of God, that the man of God may be PERFECT;" though it must be confessed, that the achievement of it requires a treatment of the inspired volume widely different from that which it too often receives.

It might have been expected that the sacred oracles, as the Word of God, the original depository of his truth and its exclusive standard, should have remained secure amidst the conflicts of polemical theology. The contrary, however, has been the fact. Yet I do not now refer so much to the mutilations of the critics, as to the neglect of those greater num-

bers, who, professing themselves content to receive the Bible as it is, contrive to render nugatory what they dislike by a much easier process. Some persons, for example, disallow, and do everything to evade, the obvious force of a passage which militates against their opinion. Some even express disapprobation of portions of the Divine Word itself, and call one text legal, another Calvinistic, and another Arminian; under which or similar heads they are no sooner classed, than they are consigned to oblivion as inclination may dictate. While others, as if in despair, make up their minds to maintain some favourite doctrine, and to abandon every thing which is not, or does not seem to be, consistent with their preference. Nothing can be more derogatory to the character and authority of the inspired volume than such treatment. With whatever exceptions in other respects, as it regards doctrinal truth it may safely be affirmed, that, if there is veracity and wisdom in any part of it, there is in every line and in every word. If any sentiment of this class is made known on the authority of God, and for the good of man, so are each and all; and if an harmonious and perfect system is to be constructed, it is by employing, not a part of the sacred materials, but the whole.

The expectation surely cannot be deemed unreasonable, that, as we allow of no sentiments in religion which are not contained in the Scriptures, we should exclude none which are. But there is a possibility of receiving them in so vague a sense, and of holding them in so loose a manner, as to derive from them scarcely any sentiments at all. A habit may be formed of employing the language of the Bible, without attaching to it a determinate meaning. Require such a person to express his theological ideas in other phraseology, and he is at a loss for consistent statements, if not for intelligible ones. In what sense he holds the doctrines which relate to the covenant with Adam, the corruption of human nature, the responsibility of fallen creatures, the death of Christ, the election of grace, and the perseverance of saints, or whether he holds them at all, he cannot without difficulty affirm. In a superficial sense he believes every thing, and perhaps preaches every thing; but, as he can express nothing with accuracy or vigour, so he may without impropriety be said to believe nothing. If he happens to maintain a sentiment strongly, he is unable either

to state it judiciously, or effectually to defend it; and if he wishes to escape from the difficulties which beset him on one hand, he rushes into those which present themselves on the other; and from thence, perhaps, is thrown back, in endless vacillation, "like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." Such a man, one would think, could scarcely be happy; he certainly cannot be eminently useful. Let us rather study to ascertain the real import and proper bearing of every declaration the Scriptures contain. If the apparent sense of some passages should require to be modified by the clear tenor of others, we may still be assured that, as in no case there can arise a real contradiction, so in none will the language of Holy Writ be destitute of an important meaning and its sentiments of an appropriate influence. We are not entitled to rest, until we attain such views as will enable us to allow a just meaning and unfettered operation to every portion of the inspired testimony.

It is on this principle that I have endeavoured to form my own sentiments, convinced that the aim is excellent, and hoping that it has been taken without guile. If I have not yet succeeded, I still desire to do so; and I shall esteem it no small benefit, if my attempt should elicit observations adapted to facilitate the acquisition.

If it should be thought singular, that, after professing so high a regard to the Oracles of God, I should have made so sparing a use of them, I have two things to say in reply. The one is, that it was not my object to ascertain the import of the declarations of Holy Writ individually, but to sketch general principles on which the whole may be understood; an object to which the quotation of particular passages was by no means necessary. The other is, that I could not have made specific references, without entangling myself in innumerable minor controversies; since almost all the passages bearing upon contested opinions are also of disputed interpretation, and their import is determined much more by doctrinal bias, than by textual investigation. I now wish the reader to consider, whether, on the system presented to him, he can consistently understand the drift of the whole Bible. If he cannot, it has no claim to his regard. If he can, the fact is a pledge of its truth. The Scripture, like a lock of numerous and intricate wards, can be opened by no key but its own.

On the method which I have used in exhibiting my views, I offer but one other remark. In tracing the ways of God towards man, I have pursued them from effects to causes, from facts to theory. It has thus happened, that what is first in the order of nature is last in that of observation; but, if it should, to some readers, appear unusual to place the doctrines of election, perseverance, and the covenant of grace, in so remote a position, I trust they will feel that they have not, by this location, suffered any depreciation. It is by commencing on the lower grounds that the path of investigation is most distinctly traced, and most securely trodden, to these sublime and celestial elevations.

Of those who may do me the honour to read this little volume, I request an attention at once serious and candid. I hope not to be made an offender for a word, when treating of subjects on which it is so difficult to speak with perfect accuracy and precision; and more especially, since I have been required to touch, in so small a compass, almost all the principal differences which obtain in the religious world, without any opportunity of explaining myself at large, or of supporting my views by an extended argument. It has been my wish to furnish materials for thought, and with this view I humbly commend the effort to God, and to his blessing. If I may not hope to make my appearance on the field of controversy, with however peaceable an object, without exposing myself to a measure of the peculiar bitterness by which theological discussions have been unhappily distinguishable from all others, my only answer is, with the ancient, "STRIKE, BUT HEAR."

JOHN HOWARD HINTON.

READING, *Feb.* 20, 1827.

INTRODUCTION.

It has been customary to divide theology into two parts, natural and revealed; and, in accordance with this view, to distinguish between natural and revealed religion. But we are not disposed to adopt this method. From the works of nature, indeed, are deducible many striking and cogent proofs of the existence of God, and of some of his attributes; and it is equally certain, that the natural relations in which we stand to our Maker constitute the primary foundation of his claims, and of our duty. But the worship and service of God, from the first, have been made the subjects of direct communication from himself to man; so that religion cannot, to any good purpose, or scarcely by any possibility, be separated from Divine revelation. Nor is it very easy to determine how far the light of nature alone is capable of conducting us, in an inquiry into the attributes of the Most High. It is at least certain, that neither we nor our first parents have had any opportunity of making the experiment. For us the light of truth is previously shed on every object we contemplate, while the first of mankind appear to have been immediately brought into direct acquaintance and intercourse with their Creator. Revelation having, therefore, been so early and so copiously given, it is at once a needless and a futile attempt to conjecture how we might have proceeded without it. The Christian theology is to be studied in its grand depository, the sacred oracles, which are "given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

It may strike an attentive reader of the Holy Scriptures, however, that the existence of God, though everywhere implied, is not among the truths formally asserted in them. They copiously declare what he is, but nowhere expressly announce the fact of his being. If any surprise should be occasioned by this observation, a moment's reflection will

remove it. If the Scriptures were the communication of some other being than the Almighty, they would naturally have taught us that there is a God; but, since they profess to be a revelation from God himself, such an annunciation would be plainly inconsistent with their character. They assume that his existence is already known, and sufficiently demonstrated, without revelation. The whole tenor of Scripture is, "Thus saith the LORD;" and it were fruitless, if not absurd, for any being to address us, who had not previously given us some intimation of his existence. This might, indeed, have been furnished to our first parents by a direct discovery; but this would still be a mode, though varied, of sensible proof, and could not after all supersede the necessity of other evidence, since it could serve for the information of themselves alone, whereas satisfaction on the same point is equally requisite for every man in every age. We are thus, then, conducted to a decision of the disputed question, whether there be any truth of which the works of God alone are adapted and designed to afford demonstration: for here is one (although the only one), namely, the existence of God, of which, if the works of nature do not furnish it, there is no demonstration at all. Making full allowance for the influence of moral darkness on the one hand, and of traditional instruction on the other, it can admit of no reasonable doubt that the very existence of the world, the marks of design in its structure and of superintendence in its changes, are sufficient to produce in the mind of every man such a conviction of the existence of some higher nature, as to lay a just foundation for the appeal, "Thus saith the Lord." It is to the works of God that the Sacred Scriptures refer us for the proofs of his existence. "For the invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the foundation of the world; being declared by the things which are made."

If our reception of Holy Scripture as the Word of God requires, on the one hand, that his existence should be previously evinced, it demands, on the other, some proofs that he has really spoken what is presented to us in his name; and, although many objections have been raised against the inspiration of the sacred records, the evidences of it are abundantly convincing to every honest mind. It is not necessary here, however, to enter into the arguments.

In proceeding to examine the contents of the inspired volume, we cannot but remark at the outset, the manner in which its truths are made known. It has about it nothing systematic. Facts, doctrines, and precepts, all of the utmost importance, are exhibited either in narratives and parables; personal, domestic, or national history; devotional odes; epic and other poems; familiar letters; or sublime predictions. Truth, however, is a whole, though imparted in "divers portions;" nay more, truth is a system, in however fragmentary a method it has been communicated. It must, indeed, be confessed, that, in the various systems framed by men, violence has often been done to truth, and equally to sacred scripture, which is truth; some portions having been selected according to a prevailing bias, to the treating of others with comparative or total neglect. But, while some persons have thus brought themselves into deserved disrepute, it should be recollected that there is an extreme on either hand. If human systems are not truth, truth itself is a system still; and there are many advantages in its systematic exhibition. In this method we shall accordingly proceed, we hope with upright intentions; whether with any better result than our predecessors, let our readers judge.

BOOK I.

OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

Of the existence of God, it has been already said, the proofs are to be found in his works; his attributes are now to be considered, under the guidance of sacred writ. But before proceeding to the detail, it is necessary to lay down the previous or primary truth, that, as there is a God, so there is but one. This is a fact repeatedly asserted in the Scriptures, and very capable of illustrative proof from the unity and harmony of the works of creation. The minds of men have, indeed, powerfully tended to polytheism; but it was "because their foolish hearts were darkened," as to the character of that glorious being who alone is all that deity should be. The mixture of good and evil in the world, also, has given rise to the notion of two opposite principles; but, while the existence of evil doubtless proves the existence of an evil agent, it can by no means be admitted as evidence that that agent is a god. It is, in truth, perfectly incredible, that while the existence of one God is so manifest, proof should not have been given of the fact if others have really a being.

The one living and true God may be contemplated as he is, first, in himself; next, in the station he fills; and lastly, in the works he performs. In other words, his aspect is personal, official, and active.

PART I.

OF THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

In speaking of the personal character of God, we mean to advert to such properties as belong essentially to his nature,

and without which he cannot be conceived to exist. Although he does of necessity occupy the highest elevation in the universe, and perform the most glorious of all works, these ideas may be separated from our conception of his being; and our attention, therefore, may be properly fixed on what he is in himself, independently of activity and station, while illustrative of his infinite capacity for both.

The attributes of the personal character of God are either natural, or moral.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Natural Attributes of God.

1. We have just asserted the truth, that there is but one God; we now add the kindred, but not identical proposition, that God is one. Such is the pointed declaration of the Jewish lawgiver, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." And we notice it the more particularly, because of its peculiar moment in connection with the doctrine of the trinity. Whatever the import of this doctrine may be, of which we shall speak immediately, it cannot be understood as calling in question the fundamental truth, that an entire and essential unity pertains to the divine nature.

At the same time we are taught that this unity exists together with a distinction. The Father, the Son or Word, and the Holy Spirit, are exhibited in sacred Scripture as each essentially divine, and as constituting, while mysteriously distinct, the one God. How can three be one? has often been triumphantly asked, as reducing the trinitarian to an absurdity; but it is enough to reply, that three are not asserted to be one in the same sense in which they are three: the assertion is not, therefore, necessarily, either absurd or contradictory; nor can it be shown to be so in fact, until the different senses in which God is declared to be one and three are clearly ascertained, which, we apprehend, will not be within the period of theological controversy. To reject the doctrine because of its mystery, is to adopt a principle as

dangerous as it is irrational; since, on the one hand, to creatures of so limited a capacity, it is inevitable that mysteries should exist, and since, on the other, they do in fact appear at so many points, that he who is determined to believe nothing mysterious will soon be obliged to believe nothing at all. It is much to be wished, however, that this subject had been treated in more scriptural language, and that men had never aimed at being wise above what is written. It is to be regretted, even, that the word *person*, which has been used for want of a better, has been applied to this subject; since, although some of the ideas it suggests are in unison with the import of inspired language, others of them are totally inapplicable. To endeavour to solve the mystery by saying that the terms Father and Son imply such a relation between the two persons so denominated as that, though they are of the same substance, possessed of the same attributes, and equally God, just as a human father and his son are equally men, yet the second must be personally subordinate to the first; and that the Holy Ghost, who is called the Spirit of God, and is said to proceed from the Father, and to be sent by the Son, must be conceived as subordinate to both, much in the same way as a son is subordinate to his parents, though possessed of equal or even of superior powers—this were to relinquish the doctrine itself. To say that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God, is surely to say that each possesses all the attributes which are essential to deity; or, which is the same thing, that each is self-existent, independent, and eternal. And if so, neither can be, in his nature, derived or subordinate. If not so, neither is God.

2. It is one of the simplest but sublimest lessons of Holy Writ, that "God is a spirit." The expression refers us to the grand division of known existences into two classes, spirit and matter. Nothing, it appears, can be known of the essence of either; and the properties even of the latter are open to very limited observation. The term spirit avails, however, towards a negative definition of the divine essence. It is altogether incorporeal. What actual qualities appertain to spirit, of consciousness, thought, sensibility, volition, or action, it is not for us here to inquire; but all such attributes are to be considered as residing in the divine nature in the highest degree. The frequent ascription of bodily parts to the

Almighty in the Holy Scriptures no way invalidates this statement, since we have no method of describing him but by analogy or comparison with ourselves. The truth that God is a spirit, although it required to be revealed ere it could be known, harmonizes now it is revealed with all other parts of divine knowledge, and with all worthy ideas of God.

3. To spirituality, as the leading attribute of God, we have to add eternity. "From everlasting to everlasting," exclaims the psalmist, "thou art God." Eternity is to us an incomprehensible attribute, except as considered negatively, and as implying that the divine existence has neither beginning nor end. If the Most High had a beginning, he must have had a cause; but it necessarily belongs to God to be the first cause, the cause of all things. And if his being should ever terminate, it must be either by essential corruptibility, which, as God is a spirit, is utterly remote from his nature; or by the will of some other being, or by his own, both of which are plainly impossible. The eternity of God implies his possession of the kindred attributes of self-existence, necessary existence, and independence.

4. Inseparable from eternity is immutability. "Immutability and eternity are linked together; yet they differ in our conception. Immutability respects the essence or existence of a thing, eternity respects the duration of a being in that state: or rather, immutability is the state itself, eternity is the measure of it. A thing is said to be changed, when it is otherwise now, in regard of nature, state, will, or any quality, than it was before, when something is either added to it, or taken from it: but it is the essential property of God not to have any accession to, or diminution of, his essence or attributes, but to remain entirely the same. He wants nothing, he loses nothing, but uniformly exists by himself, without any new nature, new thoughts, new will, new purposes, or new place." * It is obvious that immutability has varied aspects towards the Divine Being. His essence, whatever that may be, is immutable, and so are all his attributes. Nor can it be otherwise if his existence is eternal and necessary; for what necessarily and eternally is, is necessarily and unchangeably what it is. It is manifest also that this attribute is an excellence, only on the supposition of the supreme excellence of the nature to which it appertains.

* Charnock.

5. Another attribute of the divine essence is immensity. "As eternity is the perfection whereby God hath neither beginning nor end, and immutability the perfection whereby he hath neither increase nor diminution; so immensity is that whereby he hath neither bounds nor limitation. As he is in all time, yet so as to be above measure by time; so he is in all places, yet so as to be above limitation by any place." "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." If God be, he must be somewhere; that which is nowhere has no existence. But, if there is any place where God is not, *there* is no God; which cannot be, since the existence of God has already been shown to be necessary. If he be not everywhere, he cannot be God to the universe; no part of which, however, is consigned to atheism.

6. "The Lord," saith the Scripture, "is a God of knowledge." And again, "His understanding is infinite." A capacity of knowledge appears to belong to the essence of mind, or spirit, and is indicated by the derivation of several of the names of God, as *θεὸς*, *δαίμων*. And both the capability and the possession of knowledge are of the utmost necessity to the excellence, perfection, and activity of his nature. "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" Among the objects of God's knowledge are to be comprehended his own being, and all other actual or possible existences; all past or present occurrences, including the most secret operations and the internal state of rational creatures; all possibilities of operation, and all future actual operations of all beings. In two words, omniscience and prescience belong to this perfection.

7. Volition also appears to be a necessary property of mind; implying a sensibility to the desirable and undesirable qualities of objects, and a consequent determination, or choice. And this, in fact, is necessary to intelligent action. To suppose the divine nature to be inert is impossible. In the sacred Scriptures it is represented as possessing the utmost activity, itself the origin and support of the universe. Now God acts by his will. He chooses his course, and his determination accomplishes it.

8. The last we shall mention among the personal attributes of God is power. "Once hath God spoken, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." So necessary is this attribute to the excellency of any being, that it is

impossible to separate it from the idea of God. And, according to his supreme excellence, it is his prerogative to be all-powerful. "I am God Almighty," says he of himself. "All things are possible with God," subject to no other limitation than such as the infinite rectitude and wisdom of his nature prescribe.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Moral Attributes of God.

1. GOD'S primary moral attribute is benevolence. Such is the import of the term used by the apostle, when he says that "God is love." And the same idea is, with great frequency and force, expressed in the devotional writings of the Old Testament. The exercise of this attribute supposes the existence of beings capable of pleasure or pain, towards whom we affirm God to be benevolent, that is, to wish and delight in their happiness. That this is the fact might be argued from his own happiness; for none but a miserable being can be malignant. But abundant proofs of it may be drawn both from his works and his ways. Witness the multiplied capabilities of pleasure which his creatures possess, and the subserviency of all nature to their enjoyment. Difficulties, indeed, arise from the present state of the world, in reference to the prevalence of natural, and the entrance of moral evil; but the discussion of these would lead us too far. Suffice it to say that they by no means invalidate the general argument, and to refer our readers to a masterly consideration of them in the Bishop of Chester's Prize Essay on the Records of the Creation. According to the state of the objects towards which it is exercised, do the names vary by which this attribute of God is distinguished. The bounties of providence are ascribed to his goodness; his kindness to the miserable is compassion; to the unworthy, grace; and to the judicially criminal, mercy.

2. Next to benevolence is rectitude, or holiness. The latter of these terms is the more scriptural, and is introduced

into the most lofty ascriptions of praise to the Most High. He pointedly claims this perfection for himself, and has made it prominent in the adoration of the heavenly hosts, who are represented as crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." But, if we ask what is holiness, the obvious significancy of our other term furnishes a reply. It is the rectitude of the Divine Being; the entire agreement of his moral attributes, in their essence and exercise, with what is right, and an absolute freedom from all that is wrong. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Such is the necessary condition of his existence; and most necessary it is, if the being of God is to be contemplated with satisfaction, or even without dismay. This attribute may be regarded as the vesture which encircles the active powers of deity, or as the cincture which at once consolidates and regulates their actions. It prescribes the limits which none of them may pass.

3. To love and holiness we add wisdom. This quality supposes the possession of knowledge, and discovers itself in producing the best selection of objects, and the best arrangement of means. Its possession therefore implies, not only excellent natural faculties, but a sound moral taste. Of God's knowledge we have already spoken; under the guidance of love and holiness it becomes his wisdom. His wisdom is unsearchable, and so far beyond comparison with that of all created minds, that he is declared to be "the only wise God." It is emphatically his to accomplish the most glorious designs amidst impenetrable darkness and awful mystery.

4. We close the enumeration of God's moral attributes with veracity, or truth. "Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" is the indignant appeal made on his behalf to a suspicious world. "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." It is plainly impossible that a being who is unchangeable should fail of truth; nor can any reason be assigned why the Almighty should wish to recall any thing he has uttered. Associated with veracity is faithfulness, a disposition altogether inseparable from immutability, and of the most serious bearing upon our condition, as connected with the promises and threatenings of the Divine Word.

PART II.

OF THE OFFICIAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

Such are what may be termed the personal attributes of the Divine Being. There are others which may be called official; founded, indeed, upon these, but exhibiting, not so much what God is in himself, as what he is in the station he occupies. Under this aspect, he may be contemplated either as possessing natural dominion, as exercising moral government, or as engaged in the work of human redemption.

1. God's natural dominion comprehends the regulation of the course of nature and the affairs of his creatures; the right and power of assuming which are plainly founded on the work of creation. "As clay in the hand of the potter, so are ye in my hand, saith the Lord." In this respect he has an absolute supremacy and sovereignty. "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" There is none to whom he is answerable for his proceedings; "he giveth not an account of any of his matters." The sovereignty of God, however, denotes his freedom only from external, and not from internal, control. Holiness, benevolence, and wisdom, being essential attributes of his nature, are also inseparable characteristics of his dominion.

2. God's moral government is the system which he has adopted towards his rational creatures, and more especially towards mankind. He demands a voluntary obedience, regulated by a law, and enforced by sanctions, authoritatively promulgated. The primary characteristic of this system is not benevolence, but justice. It is in equity that the claim to such obedience is founded; perfectly accordant with equity is the law we are required to obey, whether referred to the rights of God or the capabilities of man; nor less equitable are the several recompences of obedience and disobedience. And as nothing unjust is required or threatened, so no departure from justice is allowed in the progressive and final development of this administration. When "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," we shall "receive according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad." No sentence will be more than equitably severe, nor otherwise than equitably kind.

The institution of God's moral government is obviously, in the order of nature, subsequent to his possession of natural dominion; upon which, indeed, it is founded, and in which it effects a striking modification. For the sphere of his moral government, the Almighty selects a portion of the objects which are subject to his natural dominion, and, through the whole extent of this secondary system, the aspect of his ways is changed from sovereignty to equity. Had nothing existed but his natural dominion, all would have been characterized by sovereignty; but, as he has seen good to establish a moral government, this attribute yields the reins to equity. Then he would have treated his creatures as he pleased; now he will treat them as they deserve. For glorious purposes a limit is voluntarily set to his own sovereignty, which now operates only in cases beyond the scope of his moral government.

3. The work of redemption is the method in which God has interposed for the recovery of mankind from a state of sin and misery. This phraseology, of course, implies the fact (of which we shall speak more fully hereafter) that mankind are found in such a state; and the Scriptures abound with declarations exhibiting the Most High as the saviour of the world. This part of the divine conduct is of a mixed, or rather a compound, nature; combining the exercise of his personal character with the principles of his natural and moral government. Chief in operation is the infinite benevolence which constitutes the active spring of his being, and its exercise partakes largely of the sovereignty which characterizes his natural dominion: it is modified, however, both by the unsullied purity of his character, and the inflexible justice of his government; two most excellent and all-pervading principles, in strict accordance with which the whole work of redemption is accomplished.

PART III.

OF THE ACTIVE CHARACTER OF GOD.

HAVING thus regarded the Almighty as he is in himself, and as he is in the station he occupies, it remains only to

contemplate him in action. His conduct exemplifies all that has just been viewed in theory; but it exhibits also two additional and glorious features.

1. The first of these is discernible in the primary motive from which he acts. We have already spoken of benevolence and justice as impulses of divine action, but neither these, nor any other which may be assigned, can be regarded as its primary moving cause. All will resolve themselves into one more fundamental, namely, the discovery and display of his own character and excellency. Hence, in theological phrase, his own glory is his first end. Or, in the words of Holy Writ, "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever." In this respect, God takes as a motive for his actions what may not be taken by any other being. The prerogative of making his own glory his chief end is peculiar to himself. But it is also appropriate and just. No other object can be so great and good; no other, therefore, can be so fitly pursued. To subordinate his glory to any other end, would be at once to forfeit his claim to holiness, and to violate the rectitude of his character. The position which God occupies creates for him an obligation to make his own glory his chief end. And, in truth, if we imagine a period when God alone existed, we cannot conceive how he should have chosen any other.

In God's acting primarily for his own glory, however, there is nothing inconsistent with a regard to the true welfare of his creatures. His glory is the glory of a being infinitely benevolent, just, and wise; and it can be advanced, therefore, only by wise, just, and benevolent measures—by measures, that is to say, conducive in the highest degree to the happiness of an obedient universe, and to the most excellent administration possible of a rebellious one. It is rather to be said, therefore, that the law which binds the Supreme Ruler to pursue primarily his own glory, dictates and guarantees the adoption of the system which is most desirable for the creation itself.

2. A second peculiarity of God in action, consists in the determinate pre-arrangement of all his operations, and of all their results. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." The idea we entertain on this subject is

briefly this, that, before he began to act, the Almighty laid the plan of his work, and predetermined from everlasting all that he would do. "Known unto him are all his works, from the foundation of the world." It is at least manifest that he is quite capable of doing this, for which knowledge is the only requisite—and "his understanding is infinite." It is no less certain that it became him to do so; since to act without design at once indicates folly in the agent, and produces vanity in the result. It is incredible, therefore, that, in operations so vast and involving such momentous interests, the only wise God should have formed no plan; especially as all possible occurrences, from causes however concealed, are eternally naked and open to his eye.

Let the reader particularly observe, however, that predestination is associated only with God's own doings, obviously its natural limit. If there is anything done which he does not do, or if there is any free agent besides himself, such deeds and agency are equally beyond the sphere of Divine predestination; an admission which is indispensably necessary to their freedom, and is directly involved in the hypothesis. The distinction is of great importance. For, although there are no agents but such as God has made, and therefore none absolutely independent of him, yet he has created beings in such measure independent of himself as to become free agents, which our own consciousness affirms we are. We are so formed as to choose what we do, and to do what we choose; and this is free agency. The Most High is perfectly acquainted with all the results that this agency will produce; he employs it; he restrains it from evil; he influences it to good; and all these things—his own works—he predetermines; but he ordains none of the operations of this agency itself. However mysteriously to us, he has constituted it a primary and immediate source of action and character, to originate and to do things by him unmoved, and things for which therefore he is not responsible.

If an objection may seem to lie against this idea in reference to the good actions of men, which we are taught to ascribe to divine influence, and more especially in reference to conversion and other acts of a holy nature, which, if God foreordained any to salvation, he must in some sense have predetermined; it may be replied, without calling in question the grounds of the objection, that, although we are led to

ascribe the good actions of men to divine influence, they are never represented as God's actions, any more than the evil. He "worketh *in us* to will and to do." With regard to the predestination of men to eternal life, which ultimately bears, undeniably, on the actions as well as the condition of men, its bearing is not upon the former directly, but only remotely and by consequence. The proximate or immediate, and therefore the real objects of predestination, are those gracious operations which God purposes to execute, and not the results which, as he doubtless foresees, will follow from them. And it is to the proximate and direct, not the indirect and remote objects of divine predestination, that the question now before us exclusively refers. The precision and perfection with which he foresees all the influence which the causes he ordains will produce on free agents, is the ground on which he predetermines, with infinite facility and accuracy, the final results of operations in which they are comprehended. We conceive our view of this subject not to involve the notion of the absolute contingency of events, nor to be by any means inconsistent with that of philosophical necessity, in the only proper sense of it, as defined by President Edwards, viz., certainty of sequence.

From this statement two conclusions result. First, that the doctrine of predestination does not interfere with the fact of human responsibility. Secondly, that it does not in any measure tend to the blasphemous conclusion, that God is the author of sin. Moral evil found its birth in the breast of an agent himself free; it is no work of God's, neither is the conduct of men so; both the one and the other, therefore, are the objects, not of predestination, but solely of eternal foreknowledge and wise control.

BOOK II.

OF THE WORKS OF GOD.

THE works of God comprehend all natural objects, visible and invisible, himself alone excepted. It is his grand and exclusive prerogative to be self-existent; whatever else exists, therefore, must owe its being to him. Hence the appeal of the Most High, on the most extended view of the works of nature, "Hath not my hand made all these things?"

1. Vast as the extent of the universe appears to the eye, it must by no means be judged of by the limited sphere of our vision. Stars and systems spread far beyond, and, of unknown locality, "the heaven of heavens." The last is to be regarded as the immediate residence of the Almighty, whatever visible or local may justify the use of such a phrase. It appears also to be the appointed abode of angels, themselves creatures finite, although glorious, and necessarily having, therefore, a local habitation. Of the nature of these superior beings we have little information. They are to be regarded as simple, pure, and intelligent spirits; in all things adapted to the exalted aspect of their station, which seems to be that of attendants and ministers of the heavenly Majesty.

2. Many questions of great interest have been suggested respecting the universe of stars. It is far from being certain whether they were all created simultaneously with the earth, or at an indefinitely earlier period. That they are inhabited worlds appears to be matter of high probability. In reference to the comparative insignificance to which our planet is thus reduced in the Divine works, the reader may consult, either Fuller's Gospel its own Witness, Chalmers's Discourses on Modern Astronomy, or Taylor's Saturday Evening.

3. That part of creation which is most open to our observation, and most immediately interesting to us, is the globe on which we live. But this, too, contains many mysteries. For an elucidation of the sacred narrative (Gen. i.) we cannot do better than refer the studious reader to Dr. Dwight's Theology, vol. i., Serm. xvii.—xxii. We shall only remark

the probability (the interpretation of the first verses of Genesis entirely harmonizing in this respect with the inductions of geological science) that the substance of the earth had been previously created, and had served, under some antecedent modification, for a display of divine wisdom and goodness then consummated; a purpose for which the same materials may again be employed, after the general conflagration.

4. No subject can possess greater interest than the true nature of man, the creature for whom this beauteous world was made. Unlike the angels in being made of the dust of the earth, he is yet nearly allied to them in possessing a spiritual, intelligent, and moral nature; a property which connects him with the future world, and constitutes his chief dignity in this. The analysis of the intellectual powers does not belong to this place. But it pertains to us here to inquire into the moral faculties of man, which constitute by far the more important aspect of his being, and upon which the whole of the divine conduct towards him is founded. Clear views of these are manifestly of the utmost importance, and it will be found that misconceptions and perplexities respecting them are at the bottom of the most violent controversies, and the most serious mistakes, in theology.

The moral powers of man bear a relation, of course, to the moral properties of objects, to good and evil. These constitute a very distinct and important class of properties, with which no earthly creature but man has any connexion; and the powers which qualify him to be acted upon by them, and to act under their influence, are those of which we are in search. Every action supposes three things to have taken place; perception, emotion, and volition. An object is first seen, it is next felt, it is finally chosen or rejected. If it were not seen, it could never become an inducement to act. Neither could it be so if it were not felt; since it is obvious, not only that our feelings of pleasure or aversion are the immediate excitements of our choice, but that, upon any other supposition, it is impossible to assign a reason why we do not choose or reject every thing which we see. It is clear, in fine, that our choice, though induced by our feelings, is distinct from them, both because we have many feelings without any choice at all, and because almost every instance of choosing is connected with the excitement of dissimilar

and even contrary feelings, while choice is, and can be, but one.

If an action involves these distinct exercises of the mind, it follows that the mind possesses faculties corresponding with them; namely, one faculty of perceiving, another of feeling, and a third of choosing. These constitute the active powers of man. And the same, as accessible to moral influences, are man's powers of moral action; a capability of moral perception, of moral feeling, and of moral choice.

1. A capability of discerning the good and evil qualities of things is plainly necessary to moral action, and is a step towards it. And it is unquestionably possessed by every man of sound mind. The very notion of right and wrong, and the possibility of receiving that notion, are proofs of its existence, and its operation may be traced in the universal and incessant application of this idea, when once received. Whether it be innate or not, is a question with which we have nothing to do. The capability of receiving it is undeniably born with us; and this is all that is necessary to show the adaptation of the moral instruction administered to us.

2. A capacity of being moved by the moral qualities of things is also a necessary part of the constitution of a moral agent. Moral perception must be considered as a stimulus to corresponding action, which facts, and every man's consciousness, prove it to be. And if so, there must be a sensibility to which it is a stimulus; and a sensibility of the same kind (since it could act upon no other), namely, a moral sensibility, or a capacity of being excited to approbation and disapprobation, delight and aversion, by the perception of the good and evil qualities of things. This is plainly another and a great advance in the structure of a moral agent. Moral perceptions, like all others, are in themselves cold and inactive; but, by being transmitted to a congenial sensibility, they kindle into warmth, and acquire energy. Excited feeling is a species of action, and of so powerful a kind as to propagate itself by impelling into kindred operation all within its reach. Here originates moral activity.

3. A capability of choosing anything on the ground of its moral qualities completes the apparatus of moral agency. It is necessary, as an instrument by which our feelings may

operate. For there is no determination in feeling; it is mere excitement, and greatly varies in character and degree. It is sometimes very weak, sometimes of overwhelming power; sometimes all in one direction, sometimes in different or contrary directions; sometimes it gives rise to no determination at all, and sometimes to one opposed to many of the feelings which have been in exercise. It is plain, therefore, that feeling is not determination. It induces determination. However various the emotions may be which issue in it, choice itself has an entire unity. It is the mode of expressing the balance and concentrated force of our feelings, for the purpose of determining the action to be performed, which, also, can be but one. Were the feelings the immediate impulses of action, as various and as contradictory as themselves would our actions be, which is impossible; and hence, the requisite intervention of another faculty (that, namely, of choice), to produce a determination of as much unity as must necessarily characterize the action. With this the structure of a moral agent is complete. Nothing now remains but that the action correspond with the determination, and we have a moral action, or one performed under the influence of the moral qualities of things, and expressive of the effect produced by them upon the agent.

Such is the wonderful apparatus which constitutes our accessibility to the influences of the moral world, and produces a doer of moral actions. The ultimate power in this apparatus is obviously the moral sensibility. It is at once the centre to which perceptions are transmitted, and where they are quickened into life, and the source whence the impulses emanate which induce choice, and determine its direction. In this the moral character of the agent, and of the actions he performs, is essentially to be found. Neither perception nor choice has any moral quality, unless influenced by it. By virtue of the moral sensibility, therefore, every man is what he is, whether good or bad. To be attracted by what is good is to be a good man; to be engaged by what is evil is to be a bad man. Every thing else will correspond, and be good or ill accordingly.

If the term which, for the sake of distinctness and precision, has been used to denote this important faculty, namely, *moral sensibility*, should appear somewhat remote from the ordinary phraseology of religion, it will not be at all difficult

to reduce it into common language. It is simply THE HEART. A little reflection will convince any person, that what is scripturally called the heart is no other than what has here been called the moral sensibility; and material advantage will result to the reader, if he will bear in mind that this is the precise meaning of the term.

A view thus opens to us of the method in which the authority of God bears upon mankind. It has been supposed (and is asserted, indeed, by the most acute of metaphysical writers, Jonathan Edwards), that, among the moral powers, the will is the immediate subject of divine government. But this evidently cannot be correct, since the will is but the instrument of an ulterior power, by which its actions are impelled, and from which their whole character is derived. Nor, in truth, does the idea correspond with the tenor of the divine precepts. If the will were the immediate subject of his government, for the exercises of it alone should the Almighty give directions, and hold us responsible; but the fact is, that he holds us responsible for the state of the heart—or of the moral sensibility, which is the same thing—and requires us, not only to do good, and to choose good, but TO BE good. The moral sensibility, therefore, is the faculty on which his authority directly bears, and to the regulation of which his precepts are adapted.

It is a question of the highest moment, whether our moral constitution affords a proper basis for this exercise of authority. All God's ways towards man plainly suppose it, but many of man's thoughts towards God controvert it; and there are few things more advantageous in the science of theology, than a deep and clear insight into this most interesting problem.

That which God requires is that we should be what we ought to be; in other words, he enjoins a right state and exercise of our moral susceptibility, and he holds us responsible for all deviations from it. We ask, reverently, with what justice? Our reply is, that he has endowed us with powers and means adapted to excite the tone of moral sentiment which he demands. We have a capacity of moral perception and judgment, suited to examine, to receive, or to reject, whatever may minister to our excitement; to act even upon the moral sensibility itself, in reference to any existing excitement; and to pronounce its approbation and

condemnation unbiassed, with the authority and the fearlessness of an upright judge. In addition to this, we have a supply of rational and adequate motives, which are truly and most powerfully adapted to render the moral sentiment within us all that is required, and which will infallibly do so if they are duly entertained. Whether we give them due consideration lies with ourselves; and it is precisely for the use that we make of these exhibited motives that we are held responsible to our Maker. If he had required us to be in any state of feeling for which he had not shown sufficient cause, we should assuredly not be held criminal; but it is difficult to imagine how we can be held innocent, if we have wilfully neglected (and all such neglect is wilful) the manifestations of his glory and goodness so powerfully adapted to inspire the emotions he demands. In this view of human responsibility we cannot perceive any thing at variance with equity; and we are persuaded, both that no other principle will be adopted by the final Judge, and that no other need be adopted for universal condemnation.

Commencing at this point, responsibility becomes general. It attaches to every part of human character and conduct, in proportion to the means of rectitude enjoyed, and the free or voluntary nature of the actions performed. The latter, indeed, is a most important and essential condition. No man can be held accountable for what he does under constraint, or against his will. It will be found, accordingly, that, in the view we have taken of the active powers, free agency is necessarily implied. Nothing intervenes between the choice and the action; nothing affects the action but the choice. We do what we choose, and because we choose it; and therefore we act freely. Choice itself is nothing but our own feelings reduced to unity of expression; it is our wish upon the whole; and our actions also are an expression of our wish upon the whole, subject only to the accidental occurrence of external impediments, the consideration of which can scarcely enter into the discussion of moral responsibility.

Our readers will perceive that we have avoided speaking of the freedom of the will. The truth is, that, while we hold, as among the most important and fundamental of truths, that no being can be held accountable without possessing free agency, we can form no conception at all of free will.

According to the best notion we can attain of it, the will is not a faculty of which either freedom or bondage can be affirmed. It is the mere instrument of the heart, and acts only as it is acted upon. Every determination arises out of preceding feelings; or, which is the same thing, the feelings constitute the necessary and the sole impulse of the will. Nor is this phantom of free will in the remotest degree necessary to responsibility, or to free agency. To act freely is to do what we choose. Certainly, no being can be held responsible for his conduct more justly than one who is first called to choose what he will do, and then permitted to do what he chooses. And such is man.

One thing more is necessary to the system of moral responsibility. It involves the idea that the agent is worthy of praise or of blame, according to the manner of his action, and that he may justly be treated accordingly. It has appeared to some persons impossible to conceive that any created being can be equitably subjected to such discipline, inasmuch as no creature can be supposed to possess an independent or self-derived activity; a principle, however, from which it would follow, both that infinite power and wisdom are incompetent to the production of moral agents, and that all the wickedness existing in the universe has God for its author—two very startling, and surely inadmissible conclusions. It is certain that the Almighty considers the heart of man as an original or primary source of action and character, because he treats it as such. Nor is this without reason. A being who is capable of perceiving the good and evil properties of things, and is endowed with a sensibility adapted to be excited by them, *ought* to be so excited, *when they are duly exhibited.* To be so is right and praiseworthy; not to be so is blameworthy and wrong. Every man feels this respecting his children, his servants, and his neighbours; and we may safely add, that every man feels it also respecting himself. Nothing more is necessary to bring home the blame-worthiness to the bosom of the agent, than to know that he himself has acted amiss. However he may attempt to excuse it, he can no more approve it in himself than in another, nor beguile himself of the conviction that he deserves whatever measure of disapprobation or suffering may be appropriate to the wrong of which he has been guilty. Moral consciousness, therefore, or consciousness of

our moral acts, completes the constitution of man as an accountable creature; it gives a sanction to all the proceedings which may be founded on this basis, and will for ever silence the supposable charge of injustice, even in the most awful bearings of the judgment to come.

To this account of the moral powers, we add, that man was made immortal; not, perhaps, that the soul is essentially so, but that it was always intended to be so.

We make no attempt to distinguish between instinct and reason. The essential difference between the human and the brute spirit seems to us to resolve itself into these two points, the moral and the immortal nature of man.

The creation of the world is undoubtedly a most illustrious display of the Divine glory, and the world itself a volume in which most interesting lessons may be learned of the wisdom, goodness, and power of its Maker. If it must be admitted that, in its present state, it gives indications but of mixed and imperfect goodness, it must be remembered also that its present is not its original condition. Much of the prevailing misery is clearly to be traced to the entrance of sin. What natural evil existed previously to sin, or might have existed without it, is probably best regarded as an inseparable adjunct of existence itself, and a small drawback from its wide-spread felicity.

BOOK III.

OF THE WAYS OF GOD.

As far as they are revealed to us, the ways of God have respect to two classes of beings, angels and men.

PART I.

OF THE WAYS OF GOD TOWARDS ANGELS.

Of the ways of God towards angels but little is made known to us, doubtless because it imports us not to know. They are described as enjoying a state of exalted excellence and felicity, in the immediate presence and service of the divine Majesty. The perpetuity of their happiness appears to have been contingent on their sustained rectitude, although it is not clear that their condition was strictly probationary. It is most certain that no occasion for dissatisfaction could have been afforded them; yet the Scriptures declare disobedience to have arisen in the celestial hierarchy, as the consequence of which the rebellious angels were cast out from heaven, to some *place*, but whither cannot be told. Their banishment, however, was not connected with imprisonment, since they are represented as visiting this world, not as their place of residence, but as their sphere of operation, being bent on proceedings at once destructive to man and hostile to God. Towards the fallen angels the Almighty has exercised righteous indignation, and this alone, unmitigated by mercy. No method of conviction, or hope of pardon, is connected with their crime; although it is unquestionable, that the increasing amount of their guilt must ensure a corresponding augmentation of their misery and punishment. It is scarcely certain that the consummation of the divine proceedings respecting mankind, will be the final

period of their liberty and wicked operation. Among the angels we discern the first trace of moral evil. This, as far as we know at present, is its origin; deformed and hideous birth of a region so bright, and a bosom so pure!

PART II.

OF THE WAYS OF GOD TOWARDS MAN.

Of the ways of God towards man a much fuller account is afforded us, as of more immediate, and, indeed, of the deepest interest to ourselves; although it will be found that the sacred narrative very much confines itself to that which it is really important for us to know, and almost systematically denies the gratification of mere curiosity.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Original State of Man.

In contemplating man as he originally was, it is proper to notice his character, and his circumstances.

1. The information that we possess respecting his character, is derived from the intimation that he was made "in the image of God," a phrase concerning which very different ideas have been formed. We can find no satisfaction in interpreting it, either of the erect attitude of the body, the immateriality of the vital principle, the intelligent and rational structure of the mind, the dominion over the creatures, or the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. The language more naturally indicates, we think, the rectitude of Adam's character; the accordance of his heart, or his moral sensibility (for in this alone rectitude or its opposite lies), with his true relations. Such, unquestionably, is the most glorious property of God; and such, it is equally clear, might

have been the original property of man. Nay, it was so, for "God made man upright," and in this point actually resembling his Maker. Here, therefore, is a likeness in fact; and, if not in the only view, at least in one so far the most important of all, that it is incredible the phrase in question should have been used without referring to it. To this may be added the words of the apostle, where he speaks of "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" and of "the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." In these passages the reproduction of true holiness is represented as restoring the image of God, and they must be regarded, therefore, as unequivocally indicating that wherein it originally consisted.

2. Such, then, was the character of Adam: what were his circumstances? Our first parents were both created on the sixth day, as Moses expressly affirms; but that they were created in the garden of Eden, is an opinion which, however generally it may be received, seems not to be reconcilable with the sacred narrative. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there *he put* the man whom *he had* formed." We have not noticed this circumstance particularly because we think that any considerable length of time thus elapsed, nor is the duration of the period of any importance; the material point is, that the existence of a state prior to the paradisaic is thus indicated. And this is material, because it shows that the fabric of moral duty is independent of the transactions in the garden of Eden. It is founded in the relations existing between the Creator and the creature. These relations undeniably form a suitable and adequate basis for moral obligation, since, while they evince the rights of God, they clearly point out the duty of man, and suggest the most appropriate and influential motives to its performance. As it is difficult to find any other satisfactory foundation for the system of morals, so it is inconceivable that one so well adapted and so effective should have been overlooked.

Of the obligations thus coeval with man's existence, there are two principal aspects; the first, of personal amity, the second, of official subjection. The one is due to God because he is his Creator; the other, because he has thought good to become his Governor. Out of these arise all the aspects of

human duty, sin, and misery; and to these are reducible all the ways of God. These obligations, with all their sanctions, must be considered as existing from the moment of Adam's creation, and as communicated to him before his introduction into Paradise. This point established, it is needless to push our inquiries further in that direction; as the superadded and supernatural circumstances in which he was soon placed require all our attention.

Before proceeding, however, it may be proper to glance at the institution of the Sabbath, which appears to belong to this period. It may be doubted whether the true nature of its sanctification has not been generally mistaken. There is an insuperable difficulty in regarding it as a religious appointment. It appears rather to have contemplated the simple cessation of labour, which, even in Paradise, was the prescribed condition of man. This was plainly its character as enjoined upon the Israelites with so much solemnity, as will evidently appear from a close examination of the fourth commandment, and of the Jewish history. Nor is it easy to conceive how else it can be of universal or direct obligation; since its observance as a religious duty must be essentially spiritual, and, both in its requirement and performance, must presuppose the existence of religious character. In this view, an external and ceremonial observance of the Sabbath is not the thing commanded; nor can it, by itself, be either binding or acceptable. It seems, in truth, to have been a day privileged as a day of rest; doubtless, of the highest value as affording facilities for religious exercises, and, like all similar opportunities, not to be neglected without sin.

CHAPTER II.

Of Man's Probation in Eden.

THE account given us by Moses of the condition of our first parents in the garden of Eden clearly exhibits a state of probation, an appointed trial of man's fidelity to God, with corresponding results. It is true, indeed, that nothing is

expressed but the penalty of their disobedience; but everything leads powerfully to the opinion, that a recompense worthy of the divine benevolence, an exalted and immortal blessedness, would have followed the proof of their subjection. On the other hand, the threatened penalty was death.

The import of this term has been much disputed. There are three, and only three ideas, to which it gives rise: 1, temporal death; 2, spiritual death; 3, eternal death. We conceive that the divine sentence comprehended them all.

The only doubt of the first, the death of the body, arises from the fact that our first parents did not actually die "in the day" they ate the forbidden fruit. To say nothing, however, of their being "from that day mortal," it may be observed that "the day" was not closed when there was announced to the transgressors the interposition of mercy, a previously concerted dispensation, which began to operate from the very moment of the crime, and the immediate effect of which was to modify the execution of the sentence, not only in this, but in all its parts.

By the second, or spiritual death, is to be understood an altered tone of moral sensibility. Man had been created with his sensibility to moral objects not in a state of indifference, or in a condition equally apt to be attracted by evil and good; but with a preponderance towards good. This was his constitutional bias, anterior to, and apart from, any actual exercise of moral feeling. And in this bias towards holiness consisted his moral (or spiritual) life, of which all actual holy emotions were indications and exercises. Spiritual death, then, was the destruction of this bias, an alteration so far in the constitution of man. Nor did this act of divine displeasure leave him in a state of indifference merely, but rather with a bias to that which is evil. The change above described, there is reason to believe, actually took place upon our first parent after he ate the forbidden fruit; and it can scarcely, therefore, be regarded otherwise than as the result of his transgression, and a part of its threatened punishment.

The third idea suggested by the term used, or eternal death, comprehends the loss of the divine favour; which, of course, could no longer be enjoyed by man as a transgressor, and the forfeiture of which pre-eminently constitutes the element of future misery.

It is an important question, whether the interests involved in this trial were those of our first parents only. As a repulsive effect might be produced on some minds by a direct assertion that the covenant was made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, for the present (irrespectively of doctrine) let us direct our attention to facts. It is undeniable that the consequences of Adam's sin fall upon the whole race of mankind. Suffering and death are the portion of all, and even the innocent do not escape, since the babe weeps and expires. Nor is it only suffering and death which are thus entailed: every man enters the world with a depraved nature, a fact of which, if it be necessary, proof may be given hereafter. What account is to be given of these things? These are of the nature of penal evils, having come into existence only as the punishment of sin, however subsequently modified by a new system of operations; but upon what principle is punishment inflicted upon those who have no share in the offence? It may be retorted, that those who suffer have in fact no share in the offence; but it is equally certain that they must be considered as implicated parties, or else the Judge of all the earth, who judgeth righteous judgment, would not have treated them as such. Nor is there any difficulty in the case, upon the supposition that the covenant made with Adam was made with him on behalf of his posterity. The goodness, equity, or wisdom of such an arrangement may be disputed; all that is necessary for our present purpose is, that such a constitution, supposing it to be consistent with the divine character, and really to exist, would satisfactorily account for the universal spread of penal evil. It is indeed the only way of accounting for it. Either, in violation of all intelligible principles of equity, God is punishing the innocent; or, in the covenant entered into with Adam, such a relation was contemplated between him and his posterity as rendered them liable to the consequences of his crime. And this conclusion, which results from a view of facts, is also inevitably involved in many parts of sacred writ, while in others it is directly asserted.

One of the principal objections alleged against this idea, arises from its being supposed to involve the notion that the sin of Adam is transferred to his children. It is asserted, with great truth, that actions are not transferable; nor is the desert of actions so. But the objection is wide of the mark.

The sin of our first parents is not said to be transferred to his posterity, but to be imputed to them; they are not said to have committed the crime, but to be treated as though they had done so. An action may be imputed to a man, whether he has done it or not; and there is a conceivable ground on which it may be properly imputed to him, although he has actually had no share in it. It is only needful to suppose the existence of a legal administration; a system under which, as existing among men, it is of every day's occurrence that parties who have committed no offence become subject to penalties, because by law they are implicated in the conduct of another. Actions are imputed to them which they have not performed. Now the condition of our first parent partook of a legal character: and it is manifestly possible that its constitution might involve the imputation of his conduct to others.

Whether it may be said that the *guilt* of Adam was transferred to his posterity, altogether depends upon the meaning attached to the word. Guilt is clearly distinguishable from sin; but theological writers have found it difficult to agree on a definition of it. Little justice seems to have been done to the term. Guilt has been said to be an obligation to punishment by some, and a desert of punishment by others. But both definitions are too narrow; as is also that of Dr. Johnson, though comprehending both the preceding, viz., the state of a person who has committed a crime. It is rather the state of a person who either has committed, or who is legally held to have committed, a crime. The consequences of a wrong action may be twofold, according to the circumstances in which it is wrought. In every case a man who does evil deserves censure. If he be also the subject of a legal system which his fault has violated, he becomes obnoxious to punishment, as prescribed by the law; which punishment, however, he may or may not deserve, according to the character of the law itself. In the former case, the man's guilt would be his desert of censure; in the latter, his liability to punishment. It is to be presumed that laws doom no person to suffering but those who are properly considered as offenders, and in just proportion to their fault; and, consequently, desert of punishment and liability to it may be supposed to be identical. But, to show that this is not the case, it requires only to be recollected that a law

may assign an inequitable punishment, and may even, through defective evidence or other causes, convict the innocent. Judicial guilt, therefore, implies no ill desert, but simply liability to punishment by a process of law. It thus appears, also, that guilt is not properly opposed to innocence. In law, a man is either guilty or not guilty. Although pronounced guilty, he may be innocent; and, although declared not guilty, he may be criminal. The opposite of innocence is criminality; which, like innocence, assuredly cannot be transferred. But there are many ways by which liability to legal penalties may arise without personal fault; and this, it is obvious, may be transferred from one person to another, and from the criminal to the innocent. In this sense it may safely be affirmed that the children of Adam participate in his guilt. Between himself and his possible posterity there existed, and by the covenant was contemplated, such a relation as laid a proper foundation for their being involved in the results of his conduct, whether evil or good.

We cannot here enter at large into the discussions which have arisen respecting the excellence of this constitution. We see in it nothing contrary to equity according to the course of human affairs, in which it is quite usual, and indeed in many cases inevitable, to bind children to many generations by covenants made with their parents, and subjecting them to contingent evil as well as good. The only principle it is thought necessary to act upon in such affairs is, that the agreement itself shall not bear unjustly on the person immediately responsible, and that its tendency, if observed, shall be in favour of his posterity. This surely was sufficiently the case in that now under review.

Nor does it appear to us incompatible with divine goodness, but, on the contrary, highly expressive of it, that God should have entered into such an arrangement with the father of mankind. Upon the supposition that the appointed trial had an aspect of kindness towards Adam himself (which for the present we assume), it seems to be unquestionably kind to extend the benefits of his fidelity to others independently of renewed probation for themselves, and more especially to those in whose welfare the father of mankind must have been so deeply interested.

With us the wisdom of this system is equally unques-

tioned; although we are quite aware of some awful mysteries, which we cannot attempt to fathom. We will observe only, that the notion of many millions perishing for ever for Adam's sin is no less falsely charged upon the doctrine above stated, than it is false in itself. Whatever scheme of hypothetical results may be imagined, the constitution in fact makes provision for multiplied good, and gives security for only individual evil. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the threatening; from which it necessarily followed, that, in the case of transgression, Adam would have no posterity to share in the consequences of his crime. If, notwithstanding his transgression, he is become the father of many nations, it is by virtue of a new and merciful dispensation, which suspends the fatal influence of his conduct, and makes all its temporary results subservient to a state of individual probation and personal responsibility. But of this more hereafter, when we come to speak of the death of Christ.

It remains to notice the condition upon which the penalty and the reward were suspended:—"Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." It may appear singular that a precept constituting the very essence of so important a probationary state, should have been, not of a moral nature, but founded on a matter in itself indifferent. A little reflection, however, will convince us, that it was for this very reason peculiarly adapted for its purpose, namely, a test of moral character. To have attached the prohibition to a thing wrong in itself, would, to a holy being, have supplied no trial at all, and besides, would have added nothing to the obligations already known and sanctioned. And, if the prescription should seem to relate to a matter too trifling to become the arbiter of such fearful results, it should be recollected that it was as a test only it was to operate; that the moral character exhibited in relation to it is far from being of trifling amount; and that the test employed was most certain, delicate, and correct. Besides which, its trivial nature was an eminent illustration of the kindness of its appointment.

The trial itself was of the slightest description conceivable. The circumstances of abundance and comfort in which Adam was placed, took away from him every imaginable motive to

discontent; the rectitude of his nature was vigorous; the motives to fidelity were overwhelming, and the connection of the interest of his posterity with his conduct unspeakably added to their force; so that one could not have apprehended the least risk of a failure. To associate great results of blessedness to innumerable generations with such a trial, seems to indicate no niggardly or unwilling bounty; but rather an overflowing love, connected with no severity of moral discipline.

How far it comported with the perfect wisdom of God to adopt a constitution, which, while providing for so much good, admitted also, and from so small a fountain, the origination of so much evil, has often been inquired, but in vain. Nor can it be judicious to push investigation into what is undeniably beyond our cognizance. The ultimate question is not, whether it was wise to permit sin; but, whether it was wise to create free agents, from whom sin might arise. When it is considered that free agency is the essential and distinguishing feature of the most illustrious portion of the divine works, and that, without it, the whole moral universe would be annihilated, it will be difficult to come to a negative conclusion upon this point; more especially since Infinite Wisdom contains resources fully adequate to secure the effectuation of good, notwithstanding the existence of evil.

Such was the tenor of the paradisaical dispensation; but the hopes it was so well adapted to inspire were speedily blasted. It is a very early portion of the sacred writings which contains the account of the first human transgression. The details of the temptation and the crime, our readers may see illustrated at large in Dwight's Theology, vol. i., Serm. xxvi., xxvii. Without dwelling on these we proceed to notice its consequences. The eating of the forbidden fruit, of course, violated the covenant of which abstinence was the condition; but the consequences which were to be expected did not immediately follow. Spiritual death, indeed, or alienation of heart from God, appears to have directly taken possession of our first parents, as we may gather from their attempt to hide themselves from his presence among the trees of the garden. For the rest they had to await an interview with him, which took place in the course of the day in the person of the eternal Word, and the proceedings

of which are of the deepest interest. Eve was sentenced to sorrow in child-birth, and subjection to her husband; and Adam to the cultivation of an ungrateful soil till he should mingle with its dust. But was this all? It was. What, then, became of the threatening, "Thou shalt surely die"? It was manifestly suspended; and doubtless by virtue of the system of mercy which had been before prepared for this crisis, and which was now announced to the transgressors, probably with much more distinctness than to us appears. In the curse pronounced on the serpent, the declaration that the seed of the woman should bruise his head contains an obvious reference to the great deliverer; while the fact that the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skins, which could have been derived only from animals slain in sacrifice, indicates the communication of more particular and explicit knowledge. Little doubt can be entertained but that our first parents were thus immediately restored to the divine friendship, and released from death in all its aspects, save that in which it is retained in the dispensation of mercy, not as a curse, but as a blessing. They were nevertheless banished from Paradise, and sent to occupy a world adapted to a different system of probation.

And what consequences did their crime entail upon their children? To concern ourselves first with matter of fact, it is certain that the evils denounced after the fall do come upon the whole race of mankind; namely, labour and sorrow, pain and death. To these must be added a depraved nature, of which we shall speak more fully hereafter. But here we stop. We do not say, because we do not believe, that the wrath of God comes upon all men because of Adam's sin. The covenant involved his posterity with himself; but it gave security that, in case of transgression, no posterity should exist. If, therefore, he has had descendants, it is not under that covenant, nor its curse; it is under a new system, which is one of individual probation, and personal responsibility. As all mankind partake of the evils in which their first parents were involved after the fall, so all enjoy the benefit of the dispensation of grace which was then introduced; for it was by virtue of it that the evils of the present state were modified, and, indeed, that any other human beings came into existence. The true character of this dispensation it is now material to ascertain.

CHAPTER III.

The Dispensation of Mercy.

I. Let us first examine the objects it was designed to effect, as they are to be deduced from a survey of the actual condition of man.

In the first place, he had broken the covenant of Eden, and was therefore liable to death, in the full import we have already explained; and accordingly the first object of mercy would be to provide for his release from that curse.

In the next place, he had equally violated the rule of moral duty, not indeed by the act of eating the forbidden fruit, but by the dispositions exercised in conjunction with it. He was thus exposed to the further sanctions of the moral law, which denounces "tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil;" whence it would be a second object of a merciful interposition to release him from this obligation to punishment.

In the third place, he had interrupted his state of personal friendship with God, forfeiting it on God's part, and abandoning it on his own; so that it was for a gracious dispensation to provide for the restoration of the offender to a spirit of friendship in himself, and the enjoyment of the friendship of his Maker.

Whether any thing should be accomplished more than this, in the communication of benefits, must be referred necessarily to the sovereign good pleasure of the sinner's friend.

II. Such were the ends to be attained. From what source could their accomplishment be expected?

Certainly not from any operation of the principle of equity. All that could result from this rule of the divine conduct, would be the administration of his affairs in strict accordance with the laws which had been laid down for them. Without exception, these were equitably framed, both in the requirements of human duty, and in the sanctions of divine recompense; and, as justice could not be violated by the most inflexible adherence to them, so it could dictate no other proceeding.

Might not measures of kindness, however, result from the personal benevolence of God? Undoubtedly, were it not that the institution of moral government involves the necessary restriction of benevolence. In a system of government, justice is not only entitled, but required to preside. Mercy, properly speaking, is no part of a judicial constitution. If it is found in mortal governments, it is to be considered as exercised, not by the judges, but by the sovereign; and its exercise in any quarter is a direct symptom of the imperfection of the judicial arrangements. If a sovereign is entitled to grant pardons, or, in other words, to modify the operation of the laws, it is because the laws themselves are not adapted in every case to the welfare of his people. But this does not invalidate the general truth, that mercy is properly no part of a judicial system; a truth which is emphatically applicable to the divine government, established in consummate wisdom, and in all its arrangements perfect. As the Judge of all the earth, the Almighty is bound to judge righteous judgment; a deviation from it, even on the side of mercy, would reflect equally on the honour of the laws he administers, and on the integrity of his character as a judge. And if this principle be correct, it cannot consist with the equity of the divine government that any opportunity should be allowed for repentance, or that any efficacy should be conceded to it, if exhibited; repentance, like mercy, being altogether alien from the judicial system which comprehends the destinies of man. It may be added, that the holiness of the Divine Being as certainly affects the operations of his kindness. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with him." And hence arises an insuperable obstacle to the admission into his friendship of an unholy being, such as man had now become.

Although his benevolence, however, is thus regulated, its operation is not totally obstructed. For God is a sovereign. His moral government is subordinate to his natural dominion; and therefore, although it may not be subverted, it may be modified. It may not be altered in principle, but it may be adapted to different circumstances. He is at liberty to adopt any methods of kindness towards man, provided they be consistent with his essential character and his existing ways; or, which is the same thing, with his personal holiness and official justice. And as he may, so it appears that he

will, show mercy. The benevolence of his nature, therefore, is the source from whence the whole stream of mercy springs, the sovereignty of his natural dominion is the grand channel through which it reaches a guilty world, while the modifying influence of his holiness and justice determine the course in which it flows. This is especially to be remembered, that justice and holiness have nothing to do but to modify the exercise of mercy, all the operations of which are essentially and exclusively sovereign. In this portion of his ways the Most High appears first as dealing with every man justly, and then as scattering undeserved favours at his pleasure; and so it is written, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."

It by no means follows, however, that, in arranging the diversified exercises of his grace, the Divine Being has shown himself arbitrary, or capricious. There is a vast difference between sovereignty and caprice. In acting according to his own will God acts according to the nature of his will, which is essentially what he himself is, wise, holy, and good. To act without a reason were neither of these, nor does he ever do so. His pleasure is to act wisely; when he does what he will, he does "what seemeth him good." His sovereignty has been already shown to consist in freedom from external control, not from internal; and, when we affirm the exercises of divine grace to be sovereign, we mean only that the reasons of them are found, not in man, but in himself. Far from being led by this circumstance to imagine them unreasonable, we derive from it the fullest conviction of their infinite wisdom; inasmuch as motives drawn from such a source must be very far superior to any which could arise from the creature.

III. It is now obvious, that, however it might be the good pleasure of the Almighty to show mercy to mankind, there was a necessity for its being exercised in a method possessing some peculiar features, that it might agree, first, with the righteousness of his government, and, next, with the holiness of his nature. The entire superstructure of grace, accordingly, is founded on the work of the Son of God, of which it becomes now necessary to speak.

It has been already stated that the Word possesses divine attributes and glory. As engaged in the work of human

redemption, however, he assumes a new character, that of God incarnate. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This is unquestionably a great mystery, and has been made the occasion of curious inquiries, at which many stumble, and which none can pursue with advantage. Suffice it to say, that our Lord Jesus Christ appears to have possessed a real and perfect human nature, consisting of body and soul; and that this was united to his Godhead, so as to constitute of two natures one person, possessing all the essential attributes of both. His human frame was produced by influence directly divine, so that he was not a descendant of Adam, nor an inheritor of any of the sinful properties belonging to our fallen nature. With this single exception, he was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh."

But for what end did he appear on earth? To declare the will of God, say some, and to seal his testimony with his blood. This is true, but not the whole truth. He made "his soul an offering for sin," a sacrifice of atonement for human transgression. That the death of our Lord really bore this character, the proofs are by no means scanty. The passages of Scripture which assert it are numerous. In addition to which, the whole significancy of the Jewish economy which was fulfilled in him, the peculiar nature of his sufferings from his Father, and the overwhelming sorrow of his soul, with other topics, might be adduced. The offering of Christ as a sacrifice for sins undoubtedly could have availed nothing, and indeed could not have been effected, without the direct and prominent interference of the Divine Father, as the lawgiver and judge; we are led to believe, however, that the design was fully sanctioned by the Supreme Governor, and that a gracious arrangement was entered into, by which the incarnate Saviour should be allowed to represent the offender before the heavenly tribunal, and thus to lay a foundation for his deliverance from the consequence of his transgression.

IV. Let us now mark how this proceeding is adapted to the views which have been taken of the condition of man.

The covenant of Eden threatened the transgressor with death; and here one dies, whom the eternal Judge has permitted to stand in the sinner's place, and to bear the consequences of his crime. Thus then is the foundation laid, on which Adam may be released from the penalty of that broken covenant, and be brought within the influence of new

arrangements, those of the old, as far as it was penal, here finally ceasing.

Next is to be regarded the sentence of God's moral government, which equally requires the death of the transgressor, and which the death of Christ in this respect equally fulfils. But this is not all. Unlike the covenant of Eden, this continues to exist and to operate; not only ready to repeat the condemnation for the next offence, but directing its awful sanctions against the very state of the heart itself, and on this account arraigning man as a traitor and a rebel. Hence the necessity of an active as well as a passive righteousness, a fulfilment of the law as well as an endurance of the penalty, in order to place men in a relation of permanent amity with the divine government. And to this is adapted the obedient life, as well as the atoning death, of the Lord Jesus; for he thus wrought out a righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe." Now, in a perfect righteousness, which, in full consistency with his administration, the Eternal Governor consents to impute, the transgressor may be regarded as righteous. It should be observed, however, that we are not speaking of the transfer of actions, but of their consequences, which (as we have already shown), in a judicial system, is by no means anomalous. The question is not, whether a sinner is a sinner, but whether he shall be treated as such; and the proceeding adopted is to treat another and an innocent person as though he were a criminal, in order to treat the criminal as though he were righteous; a plan to the availableness of which, in addition to the adequacy of the arrangements, it is only necessary that all the parties concerned should agree. It should be noticed, also, that the obedience and sufferings of our Divine Lord, are, in themselves, perfectly adapted to the end they are designed to answer. He is man, of the same nature and race as the transgressor, and therefore a proper victim. He is an innocent man, and therefore an unexceptional victim. He is God, and therefore exalted far above the law which he fulfils; so that both his obedience and sufferings are on his part voluntary, and on man's available and all-sufficient. Their atoning value, indeed, is immeasurable and infinite.

The next aspect of Adam's sin is that which it bears towards God personally. By it we regard him as at once

forfeiting the divine friendship, and incapacitated for enjoying it. Now to effect reconciliation requires no atoning sacrifice, for God entertains no unkind feeling to be appeased. All is benevolence towards the offender; but holiness operates, in strong displeasure to his exclusion. Hence, therefore, the necessity of a work of mediation, on which the Redeemer enters as the one mediator between God and man. The end of this office is to restore the broken friendship. For this purpose Christ becomes the representative of God to man, bearing terms of peace, and exhibiting every thing adapted to remove the aversion of his heart and reconcile him to his Maker; and, when the spirit of friendship is induced, and man desires to renew intercourse with God, Christ becomes his representative to the Father, and introduces the penitent offender to him in a way that preserves and honours the divine purity. For this work of mediation our blessed Lord is fitted by his intimate relation to both parties concerned, by his high dignity, and most especially by his obedience unto death, in which he has so eminently had at heart the honour of his Father.

It is plain, lastly, that, as the work of Jesus Christ effectually provides for the removal of the consequences of sin, so it affords a sufficient basis for whatever of superabounding grace the Eternal Father may be pleased to exercise, in the sovereign communication of good things. All such bounty would tend to honour his Son, nor can any measure of it be too large for the honour which he delights to confer on him.

V. It is not to be understood, however, that the system now introduced would operate to the production of these benefits necessarily, or of itself. The actual enjoyment of them is connected with certain specified exercises on the part of man; namely, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." What are these?

Repentance is a change of mind, or disposition; and, in this connexion, a change from enmity towards God to friendship. It relates, therefore, to the personal, as faith does to the official aspect of human transgression. It is the method of regaining the forfeited friendship of God; and it is truly appropriate to this end, as including both a capability and a desire for its enjoyment, and leading to a grateful use of the appointed mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Respecting faith there has been much controversy; but, without entering into the dispute, it may be sufficient to say, that, in our opinion, it is neither the belief of the truth, nor a persuasion of personal interest in Christ. It is rather the acquiescence of a sinner in the way of salvation by Christ, or the *cordial* belief of the divine testimony. The idea which it seems important to maintain is, that, as Christ exhibited in the Gospel is the object of faith, so faith, in its essential nature, is the right disposition of a sinner towards him. It is a state of the heart. Not, indeed, apart from the exercise of the understanding, for in no case can the state of the heart be so; but in immediate conjunction with it, and inseparable from it. The facts of the Gospel are presented to us, like many other facts, for the purpose of affecting the heart, and, either properly or improperly, they inevitably do so. They are designed and adapted to produce a corresponding impression, and this also they infallibly will effect, unless on our part there is criminal resistance or neglect. There can be no reason, therefore, for excluding the state of the heart from our idea of faith. Indeed, the reception or rejection of any statement which bears on the heart, after sufficient evidence is afforded, depends exclusively on it, and is strictly an exercise of it alone. If received, the reception is an operation of the heart, and is facilitated by its previous tone of feeling; if rejected, this also is an act of the same power, of which, in like manner, its previous tone of feeling is the cause. In a religious sense, therefore, faith and unbelief are precisely the opposite states of moral feeling in men who are made acquainted with the Gospel. To say that faith is a disposition, does not confound it with love, which is clearly distinct from acquiescence in the way of salvation by Christ. Nor is it inconsistent with the instrumentality of the truth in sanctification, but necessary to it. For the purifying influence of the truth must be obstructed, and may be wholly prevented, by an opposing tone of feeling. It cannot operate unless the state of the heart be congenial with it. This congeniality of heart with the truth is precisely the idea given of faith, as acquiescence in the way of salvation by Christ; and the existence of this disposition, therefore, is of primary necessity, in order to the efficacy of the truth in producing any other of its intended results.

If, as we have thus shown, faith be a state of the heart, it

is of great importance that this fact should be clearly discerned, and constantly kept in view. We shall find it to be of the wisest adaptation as the condition of a sinner's deliverance from condemnation, and of his return to amicable relations with the divine government; and we shall see without difficulty how it may be universally commanded as a duty, and the want of it punished as a crime—in a word, how properly it is made the grand test of the evangelical administration.

Such appears to be the true nature of the dispensation of mercy. It established a new state of probation; a state in which deliverance from the consequences of sin, and the attainment of forfeited happiness, were placed within the reach of man, and made to depend upon his voluntary determination.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Subsequent Adaptation of the Dispensation of Mercy.

That the dispensation of mercy was fully adapted to the circumstances of the first transgressors is manifest, but it is not to be considered in relation to them alone. As a dispensation under which they were to have posterity, it was equally designed for their children. Was it adapted to them also? If it was, there must be in their moral character and condition the features of sin and misery to which alone it is appropriate. But is this the fact?

Although the covenant of Eden was made with our first parents for themselves and their posterity, the divine displeasure on account of their eating the forbidden fruit actually fell on themselves alone; so that their posterity were not born under the wrath of God. Irrespectively of any act of theirs, the new dispensation had the effect of preventing any of the consequences of that covenant from reaching them in their penal character, and of obviating entirely their liability to the wrath of God: if, therefore, it is further appropriate to them at all, it must be in conse-

quence of their becoming actual transgressors. Now, an arrangement contemplating them in this light implies, both the existence of a condition in which sin and ruin were possible, and a foresight of their actual occurrence. In what state then, as to obligation and duty, were the posterity of Adam?

The reply is, that they were in the original state of Adam himself. It will be remembered that the instituted probation of Paradise was not the first state of man, but was superadded to the original state of moral obligation and sanctions. This arrangement being withdrawn, mankind revert to the exclusive operation of the essential and unchangeable condition of their being, namely, the obligation of loving their Maker with all the heart, both as the necessary tenure of his personal friendship, and as enforced by the sanctions of his moral government. The avenue of happiness was thus open to the posterity of Adam, just as it was to himself previously to the trial in Eden. And why should it be supposed, as the new dispensation implies, that they would not love the Lord their God, but that, by personal sin, they would plunge themselves universally into misery?

To this we answer, that, as Adam discovered immediately after his fall a bias to evil, so the law of his nature is permitted to operate by which he begets children in his own image, and all of them partake of a similar bias. Upon the foreseen influence of this element, as issuing in both sin and misery, the dispensation of mercy is framed.

The reader will perceive that we are now introducing to his attention the doctrine of the corruption of human nature, or, as it is technically termed, of original sin. This doctrine has been much disputed; and some have been disposed to contend strongly for an uncorrupt state of our nature as its birth-right, referring all the actual wickedness of the world to the influence of example, and other secondary causes. We see no possibility, however, of effectually questioning the corrupt state of our nature as such; which, therefore, as a necessary consequence, we also hold to be total and universal. Care must be taken, however, to avoid the confusion which is apt to arise from a twofold use of the term corruption, or its kindred term depravity. These words are sometimes employed, not only (as we have now employed them) in

reference to the nature of man, but in reference to his actual passions and pursuits. In this latter reference they convey only the general idea of wickedness, or criminality; it is in the former case alone that they are taken in their technical theological import. They denote with us at the present moment, not anything that man either feels or does, but something existing in him at his birth; that is to say, a constitutional bias, or propensity. Such a bias or propensity to sin is the true notion of human depravity.

We have said that the dispensation of mercy is framed on the foreseen influence of this element, as leading to sin and misery. A large school of divines have inculcated that this "fault or corruption of man's nature" itself "deserves God's wrath and damnation;" but we cannot concur in this sentiment. There can be no ill-desert apart from voluntary action. There can be no criminality but in a voluntary agent. A bias, or propensity, cannot properly be spoken of as either good or evil. These are attributes which must belong exclusively to the being in whom the bias exists, and they will belong to him, not in consequence of the existence of that bias, but in accordance with the method in which he treats it. A bias to good may be counteracted, a bias to evil may be restrained. We maintain our position, therefore, that the dispensation of mercy is framed as a remedy, not for original sin, or human depravity, but for the actual transgressions to which it leads.

By some the corruption of man's nature has been thought to disqualify him altogether for a state of moral probation; or, which is the same thing, to destroy his responsibility as a moral agent. It is obvious that such an idea as this cannot have been adopted from choice, since it involves us immediately in the most painful and perplexing difficulties respecting the whole of the divine ways. It is a position in all respects repulsive; one which every thinking man will do his utmost to avoid; and one to which no good man can be supposed to have betaken himself, but under a feeling of dire necessity and with deep regret. Yet the divines who have taken this ground are neither few nor inconsiderable. On both sides of the grand theological controversy, in truth, it has been the general and prevailing opinion, as the structure of the respective systems evinces. The adverse parties endeavour to surmount the difficulty in different ways, the one

abandoning general exhortations and the very notion of duty as inappropriate, the other contending for the justice of universal grace; but both manifestly agree in the common principle, that of man, as fallen and corrupt, no good thing can properly be required. The adoption of this view has had the most pernicious effect, not merely on the science of theology, but on the ministry of the Gospel, and on the prevailing tone of religious sentiment. If it were possible to show it to be an erroneous one, and to destroy its influence, we cannot help thinking that all the true friends of God and man would rejoice. The former we, with the minority of divines, think may be done; and we are not without hope of the latter.

In order to see our way through the difficulties of the subject, it is chiefly necessary to ascertain, first, the true grounds of equitable responsibility, and then the exact nature of human depravity.

For the former of these, it is clear that none but a free agent can be held accountable for his actions; but we suppose it is equally certain, that, as far as the character of the agent is concerned, nothing but freedom is wanting to the equity of such a condition. He who is free to act is clearly open to inducements to act; and, supposing sufficient inducements to be exhibited, may be held responsible for his conduct.

Now it may be shown that free agency is as truly a property of our nature in its corruption, as it was in its perfection.

This position might be established by an appeal to facts, and by challenging an analysis of the moral actions and power of men in their lapsed condition. To be a free agent, we have said, is to choose what we do and to do what we choose. And, in the whole range of the moral conduct of men, is not this the fact? In doing good or ill, does not every man choose what he does and do what he chooses? Whatever mischief man has suffered by the fall, it does not appear that his mental constitution has been broken up, or that any change has arisen in the structure and operation of his active powers. If his actions are worse, it is still by the same apparatus that they are performed; and of this, as we have already shown, free agency is an essential result.

But let us advert to the exact nature of human depravity,

and see whether this will confute our opinion. The primary excellence of human nature consisted in a bias towards rectitude. Its corruption, therefore, consists in a bias towards sin. And as the primary bias towards rectitude was not irresistible, and did not absolutely determine the conduct of man to a right course, so neither is the subsequent bias towards sin irresistible, nor does it absolutely determine the conduct of men to a wrong course. It predisposes them to evil, and creates an impediment in the way of well doing; but nothing more. It leaves human free agency unimpaired.

The language of Scripture has been thought by many to convey more than is here stated, especially that of those parts of it which speak of the impossibility of our ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well; but a fallacy lurks under this phraseology, against which we must be on our guard.

There are two very distinct and different senses in which the terms cannot, impossible, and others of the same class, may be employed; and, we may add, in which they are employed, and must necessarily be so, according to the nature of the subject to which they are applied. Sometimes we mean by them what they literally express, an impossibility; and sometimes what they analogically express, an unwillingness amounting to as effectual a hindrance. This distinction is very unpopular with some divines, but it is not on that account to be given up. Independently of theological controversy or sentiment, there is a difference in fact, and the reluctance of a fearful theorist can be no valid argument against its fair application. To insist upon the mere letter, and to say, a man either can, or he cannot, and if he cannot, it is of no consequence in what sense he cannot; is to abuse one's own understanding, not only by shutting our eyes to a matter of fact, but by manifest inattention to the structure and use of language itself. It is very well known that the application of words is, in many instances, not direct, but analogical; that it often involves a concealed figure of speech; and that there are many subjects, among which the intellectual, moral, and theological sciences are pre-eminent, on which it is in great part impossible to use language of any other kind. To a correct understanding of terms so used, a discovery and regard of these concealed metaphors is obviously necessary; and without it no man can expect to disentangle himself from the mazes of perplexity and error.

The terms can, cannot, and all others of the same class, are undeniably applied to moral subjects only in an analogical sense; or, which is the same thing, they have, in this case, not their ordinary and strict meaning, but one analogous to it. In interpreting them, every thing depends on a satisfactory view of this analogy.

The words cannot, &c., in their primary sense, are used always with reference to some power supposed: and when we say, it cannot be done, or, a man cannot do it, we mean that a man's strength, if exerted, would fail, or that no supposable force would be sufficient. Now in this use of the terms there is obviously included another idea besides the one expressed, namely, that the thing referred to certainly will not be done. This follows from the former, and is comprehended in the assertion without being specified. And hence it has resulted, that the words, cannot, &c., have come to be used in some cases to denote merely certainty of consequence, or that a thing will not happen, without being intended to intimate anything respecting power employed for its accomplishment. This is the secondary, or analogical sense of them, very distinct from the primary, or literal one, and differing in a manner very important to be observed. To know in which sense they are used in any particular case is matter of little difficulty; the rule being always to understand a term in its primary or literal meaning, except the circumstances forbid it, and require it to be taken in the figurative or secondary. This is plainly the case in the matter before us, to which the literal sense of the phrases cannot, &c., is totally inapplicable. We come, then, to this conclusion, that, as applied to religious subjects, the words cannot, &c., convey the idea of certain result, and no other; and that the use of them is nothing more than an emphatic method of asserting that men will not, implying nothing respecting the nature of the impediment, which is to be gathered, as it obviously may, from the case itself.

There is, therefore, a very clear, definite, and important sense, in which the strong expressions of Scripture may be understood, in perfect harmony with the proper force of language on the one hand, and, on the other, with the just responsibility of fallen man. The Divine Oracles assert that he will not repent. They assert this as a fact, foreseen to result from the evil disposition within him. There can be

no difficulty in conceiving such a result to be foreseen by the Most High, to whom all hearts are open; nor in assigning adequate reasons for its being announced, as necessary to a true knowledge of our own condition, and as affording a very powerful stimulus to action. As to the bearing of this pre-annunciation on human responsibility, the two things seem to us to have no relation at all. The responsibility of man arises from his being endowed with proper powers, and supplied with sufficient motives. If these two conditions are fulfilled, he is justly responsible, whatever may be the result, or whether that result may or may not be foreseen or foretold. The foreknowing or foretelling cannot in any way affect his powers of action; and as a motive, in the case before us its operation is unquestionably beneficial.

It may be safely affirmed, therefore, that the language of Holy Writ, however emphatic, is not intended to convey the idea of an insufficiency of the moral powers of man as a responsible agent, but solely to announce the foreseen issue of his conduct. Our readers need not be told to how many passages of Scripture we might refer, for the most direct and decisive confirmation of this position.

Free agency having survived the fall unimpaired, with it remains everything necessary to form the basis of a system of moral probation. Notwithstanding his bias towards evil, man is still open to the operation of motives, for the consideration and influence of which, according to their real and comparative weight, he is justly held accountable.

An answer can thus be given to the plausible objection, that every man should be able to do what he is required to do. Every man *is* able to do all that God requires of him. He is just as competent to take care of his eternal, as of his temporal interests; being no otherwise unable to love God, than he is to exercise prudence, patience, or diligence. In fact, God's treatment of men in reference to both worlds proceeds upon the same system. He has made our conduct in this life to depend, in great part, on our prudence and other right dispositions; and it is equally on a right disposition that he has made to depend our condition in the life to come. The system is but one, and if the course of nature cannot be shown to be monstrous, neither can the dispensation of religion.

From the preceding observations it will be apparent to an

attentive reader, that we do not concur in the language which has been used in some quarters respecting natural and moral inability. A bias to good has been said to constitute our moral ability, and a bias to evil to attach to us moral inability. We do not understand this. We cannot perceive that the constitutional bias enters at all into our ability for moral action. I am as truly able to act, whether I am prone to one mode of action or another. To be capable of discerning, and feeling, and choosing, is all that is needful to make me able to do good or ill.

The quality of the natural bias is, indeed, an important feature in a probationary state; but it requires no otherwise to be taken into consideration, than in determining the nature and force of the motives to be employed. Though the bias be towards evil, a fair trial demands only proportionate inducements. Man, as fallen, may be less easily wrought upon than when upright; but is he so altered, that the motives addressed to him have lost either their suitableness or their sufficiency? This is the only question. The whole of the discussion depends on the answer to the inquiry, Has the Almighty exhibited motives adapted and proportionate to the state in which men come into being?

Now, if man, as fallen and depraved, is still a proper subject of moral government, any deviation from rectitude on his part will be justly accounted sin, and render him obnoxious to punishment. It is foreseen that this case will actually arise, and that all men, by sin, will incur, both the forfeiture of God's friendship, and the condemnation of his government. Thus then the scene is again prepared for the dispensation of mercy, for this is exactly the situation to which it is adapted. In fact, its whole structure presupposes all that we have said. It wears the aspect of rich and sovereign grace, and assumes the deep criminality and the just condemnation of all men. It implies the infinite rectitude of the law of God, and the excellence of his government; it holds them up to the highest honour, and provides for the salvation of sinners only by the complete fulfilment of their demands.

Assuming the actual guilt of men, the dispensation of mercy comprehends them in a probationary system. It pre-

sents deliverance from deserved punishment, restoration of forfeited bliss, and unutterable felicity in prospect, to every one that believeth in Jesus; while unbelievers fall under a condemnation proportionably awful.

One proof of this may be drawn from the system itself, which undeniably suspends its benefits, as we have already stated, on the exercise of repentance and faith, both of which are states of the heart, or of moral sentiment. They are dispositions, and such dispositions as the truths of the Gospel are directly adapted to excite. Here then is an appeal to the heart; and one most appropriately connected with a probationary system, since it inevitably becomes a test of its state, and is adapted to operate as a stimulus to action. This, also, is putting salvation into every man's power; since the only way of putting any thing into a man's power is to exhibit it in its proper attractions, and to leave it to the result of his deliberation.

The moral sensibility, as we have already shown, is the ultimate power in our nature, upon which Divine legislation primarily bears. Salvation, therefore, is made to depend upon that which may in equity be directly required, namely, a right disposition. And not only so. The particular disposition with which it is connected, namely, acquiescence in the divine method of redemption, will, in the nature of things, be the first and immediate result of an altered tone of moral sentiment (a change of heart), and an instant and certain indication of its occurrence. A man whose heart is become right towards God will be found, as the first fruits of his repentance and reconciliation, exercising faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, or, which is the same thing, submitting himself to the righteousness which is of God.

The dispensation of mercy is accordingly administered in the mode of legislative authority; faith not being merely permitted, but commanded, and unbelief being not only deplored, but threatened with punishment. And, if faith be, as we have represented it, a state of the heart, the equity of such a constitution is unquestionable, since the only thing necessary to render a man justly responsible for his moral sentiments, is that considerations be set before him at once suited and sufficient to regulate them; which, in the dispensation of mercy, is pre-eminently the case.

The objections to a merciful probation which may be

derived from the fact of man's depravity, have been already considered in treating the question of his responsibility since the fall. If that system of trial be just under which his conduct is declared to be criminal, and his condition undone, this can scarcely be otherwise which presents to him the hope and the means of salvation. Another objection has been drawn from the assertion, that, in all cases in which men are left to themselves, the experiment will fail, and that without the superadded influence of the Holy Spirit no man will be saved. Melancholy as this statement is, it must nevertheless be admitted to be true by all who receive, in their plain import, the scriptural representations of the desperate wickedness of the heart of man. But it does not avail to the purpose for which it is here adduced. The divine system of probation is not therefore absurd; seeing that, however motives may fail to persuade, they may not the less truly be adapted to do so. Nor is it fruitless; for, although men are not saved, it is notwithstanding a most glorious and excellent method of proceeding, at once exhibiting the riches of God's mercy, and exonerating him from the reproach of man's ruin. Neither is it a mockery of human woe; for on the part of God there is perfect sincerity, nor can the terms on which salvation is suspended be deemed otherwise than infinitely condescending and kind. His foreknowledge of the result cannot affect the character of the arrangement. It is manifest, indeed, that the objection would apply with equal force to the covenant in Eden, and to every instance of moral trial.

Such are our views respecting the strictly probationary nature of the dispensation of mercy. Unlike the former, it is a system of individual probation. There the interest of many depended on the conduct of one, here every man's welfare is connected only with his own. The salvation of our first parent was associated with his individual faith, which, nevertheless (however his release from the curse of the Eden covenant involved that of his posterity also), was effectual to the salvation of himself alone. And it is thus in all cases. "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned."

CHAPTER V.

Of the Universality of the Dispensation of Mercy.

We now proceed to the sentiment, at which we have already hinted, that this new state of probation is universal, as well as individual. It comprehends the whole of mankind.

Of course, an exception arises to this assertion, with regard to those of our species who never become capable of moral agency; a large class, indeed, in consequence of the very early period at which a majority of them depart out of the life on which they have entered. This, however, while in some respects melancholy, is on the whole to be regarded with thankfulness; since the plan which has been sketched presents ample satisfaction respecting their future happiness. No cause can produce future suffering to any human creature, but either its own sin, or its participation in the consequences of Adam's transgression. Now, in the case of infants, and others of our kind who never possess moral agency, there can be no sin of their own; while the very dispensation under which they come into being destroys the penal influence of their first father's crime. They cannot, therefore, suffer punishment hereafter; and there is much to inspire a confident hope that God, whose mercy is so rich to sinners of the deepest stain, both prepares them for, and prepares for them, a part in the inheritance of the saints in light. It has, indeed, been held, that every person born into this world, because of original sin, or the fault and corruption of man's nature, whereby he is of his own nature inclined to evil, deserves God's wrath; a tenet which we have already said that we do not conceive to be founded in truth. Certain as it is that every human creature who comes to develope any moral character at all will develope an evil one, we take it to be equally certain that, until that period, neither good nor ill desert can be said to exist in him. In whatever sense depravity may be affirmed to belong to our fallen nature as such, and therefore to infants and others who are not moral agents, they themselves cannot be said to be criminal. They cannot be the objects of either approbation or disapprobation, of punishment or reward.

To return to the assertion of a universal probation. However it may be thought to bear on doctrinal views, there is abundant proof of its correctness in fact. It is the grand and prominent attitude in which the Almighty has placed himself in his Word, declaring in the most affecting terms his lovingkindness towards all men; issuing warnings, invitations, encouragements, and commands, without exception; and, equally without exception, denouncing vengeance, no less just than aggravated, on those who do not repent; all which, and much more, is utterly unintelligible, and altogether inconsistent, upon any other principle than that which we have laid down. But we proceed to exhibit the basis on which this system rests. It is established upon two grounds; the love of God, and the death of Christ.

First, the love of God appears to be towards mankind universal, though not equal. We say not equal, not merely because of its truth, but more especially in order to anticipate an objection brought by divines of a certain school, who assert strongly the discriminating nature of divine love. This is unquestionable; and, as we are quite aware of the existence of the doctrine of election, so our readers will find, before we have done, that we fully maintain it. But the discriminating character of divine love proves nothing on this occasion, unless it can be shown that this feature belongs to all its exercises, which is not the case. It is, on the other hand, undeniable that some aspects of divine benevolence are universal, while others are discriminating; that, while more kind to some, the Lord is good to all, his tender mercies being over all his works. The peculiar favour which he may have bestowed upon the election of grace, therefore, tends not at all to disprove the exercise of his kindness, though inferior yet glorious, to the rest of mankind. And the objector must be perfectly aware, that the amount of love we are now speaking of would by no means satisfy him, if represented as the portion of the elect. The extent to which we speak of divine love as universal, reaches to the institution of a merciful state of probation, "that whosoever believeth may not perish, but have everlasting life;" surely far enough below the favour shown to a more privileged portion of mankind, to allow ample scope for the operation of discriminating grace.

That, with whatever differences in degree, the love of God is universal in its exercise, appears to be sufficiently proved by the declarations of Holy Writ, and especially by those which exhibit the essential benevolence of his nature. Thrice within a few verses are we told that God is love; as though the apostle would intimate, that love is the essence, the substantive nature of the Almighty, in which his other attributes inhere; or the glorious principle of his being, and the effective vitality of his ways. If this be so, it cannot for a moment be doubted whether the spiritual and eternal welfare of all men, without any exception, has engaged his benevolent regard. And the testimony of Scripture is decisive to this effect.

It is indeed true, that much is said in the inspired volume of the divine wrath, and sometimes in terms of extraordinary vehemence. It is to be remembered, however, that there are two aspects in which the Most High is to be regarded in reference to mankind. He is the common father; he is also the righteous governor. It is in the latter character that he exhibits indignation; and it is necessary that he should do so, in the administration of the moral kingdom he has founded. Justice, as we have already stated, is the leading feature of this part of his proceedings, and the infliction of punishment upon offenders is one of its inevitable exercises. But this is not at all inconsistent with benevolence. A righteous judge may at the same time be the kindest of men, and his heart may bleed over the criminal he condemns. We shall find, accordingly, that to the judicial character of the Almighty all vindictive wrath is referred; and, if it is sometimes described in terms drawn from ebullitions of mortal rage, it is only because language altogether fails for an adequate illustration of its intensity. Still is benevolence the primary and all pervading character of his nature, and of his conduct. Until the execution of his righteous judgment, there is no interruption of its exercise; all the descriptions of his present displeasure, and of the wrath to come, are in fact dictated by it, in order to hasten our escape. The love of God, therefore, is universal. He is truly willing, upon the gracious terms he has proposed, to receive into his friendship every individual of mankind.

We now turn to the death of Christ, the only means by

which sinners can be brought nigh to God. Its efficacy to this end is not now under consideration. What we wish here to establish is, that this wonderful event, upon the supposition of its having any, has a universal influence on the condition of mankind.

We are not forgetful that this has been one of the most fiercely disputed points of polemical theology; nor do we think we shall be found inconsistent, in the end, with what we have asserted already, and shall hereafter state more fully, respecting the doctrine of election. But let us appeal again to facts. Is it not a fact that every man, without exception, feels the influence of the death of Christ? Without it, how would he even have been born into the world? And how comes it to pass that men sin with impunity, often through a course of many years? Upon what is the patient long-suffering of God founded? Is this strict justice? It is rather great mercy, the long-suffering of God being both adapted and designed to lead men to repentance. And how is it that, where the Gospel comes, all men are put into possession of the means of grace, and impenitent sinners continue long to enjoy them? This is scarcely the result of the rigorous administration of the law; it is rather "the grace of God," which we are exhorted not to receive in vain. Mercy, then (for, of whatever amount, it is still mercy), is exercised towards all men. And can mercy be exercised without a basis? Or can it be exercised upon any other basis than the work of our Lord Jesus Christ? Surely not. It follows, inevitably, therefore, that the work of Christ has a universal influence. To what extent this reaches is another question; but there can be little difficulty in admitting it to go thus far, "that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Those who so vehemently assert that, because Christ died for his people, he did not die for all men, would do well to grapple with the facts adduced above. They should recollect, also, that they are pressing a word very unmeaning and insignificant in itself into a service far too important. To die *for* a person, is by no means a phrase so definite as to be worth contention. There are more senses than one in which it may be used; and, in different senses, it may be true both of the elect and of the whole world.

If it should be objected, that the sacrifice of Christ is of

a vicarious, or strictly substitutionary character, and that therefore it cannot have respect to those who ultimately suffer for their own sins; it might be replied that this is begging the question, and assuming the very point in debate, namely, that there is only one sense in which Christ died for men. It will be seen hereafter, that we decidedly maintain the vicarious nature of Christ's death, in reference to one part of its operation; but we certainly do not imagine this feature of it to be the basis of its universal influence. It appears to wear another aspect also; namely, that of a grand operation of the divine government, a satisfaction to law and justice as such, laying a foundation for the absolution of sinners upon repentance, and thus for an unlimited probationary system. It is most certain, that the death of Christ will effectually answer the purposes for which it is intended. The allegation that, if Christ died for the whole world and all are not saved, he died in vain, proceeds upon the assumption that the actual salvation of men is the only end for which he died, which, in our view, is not the truth. His death was designed to effect, not only a change in the condition of mankind, but a modification in the divine government also; that is to say, the establishment of a system of individual probation for the guilty, full of mercy on God's part, and on man's of hope. This it has done. It is adapted to do more, but, for its further results, it is wisely left to the operation of moral causes; and its failure implies no more contradiction, absurdity, or disappointment, than the issue of the Eden covenant, or of a thousand operations of the Almighty.

Such are the grounds upon which we consider as firmly resting the system of universal probation. Its general aspects are highly important. It places every one of mankind in a situation of individual trial, with his present and future welfare as truly in his own hands as Adam's were in his, and as effectually as though he had never borne any federal relation to his great progenitor. He is, indeed, worse prepared for it, seeing that he is prone to evil, which Adam was not; but the condition is still equitable, and, by its unspeakably gracious nature, probably far preferable to that of our first parent. It is a situation of unquestionable mercy, and of great privilege; while the motives brought into

operation are of such amazing power as to leave every impenitent sinner without excuse, the astonishment of heaven, and the scoff of hell. It can scarcely be needful to add, that a foundation is thus clearly laid for preaching the Gospel "to every creature," in a way of sincere and unqualified invitation, as well as of rational and affectionate persuasion.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Particularity of the Dispensation of Mercy.

If impenitence, however, through the obduracy of man's heart, is foreseen to be the issue of the grand experiment of mercy, will Divine wisdom permit this to be the sole and ultimate result?

This is a question of the most intense and anxious interest, and one to which, through the riches of redeeming love, we may give a most satisfactory answer. Multitudes which no man can number will yet be saved. Only let it be remembered in the outset, that the further arrangements to which we are proceeding, like the past, originate in no claims of equity, but exclusively in sovereign grace. It is in this posture of affairs, then, that the sacred Scriptures introduce to us the Holy Spirit of God, as taking an official part in the work of redemption, under the sanction of the Father, and by virtue of the death of Christ. Of the nature and essential glory of this Divine agent we have already spoken. We have now to speak of his gracious work; for it is his prerogative and office, to effect in the hearts of men that great and blessed change so necessary to salvation. It is to be expected that some degree of mystery should attend such a subject; but a discreet line of inquiry may, perhaps, involve us in less than has often been found, or fancied.

Passing by, then, for the present, what might be said of the influence of the Spirit in enlightening the understanding, rectifying the will, and some other branches of his work, let us turn our attention to that which constitutes the essence of character, and gives its own quality, whether good or evil, to

all the other parts of our nature, we mean the heart. A sinner has been antecedently cherishing alienation from God, till it has amounted to a fixed and inveterate habit. His affections are wedded to iniquity. It is here, therefore, that the work of the Holy Spirit must begin. His first operation is to change the disposition. This can be done only in one of two ways; either by persuasion, which we have seen to be, though wisely adapted, unavailing, or by direct influence. Now there is no doubt at all that the Almighty is able to exert such an influence on the heart as shall immediately effect this change. It is as little to be doubted that he does so; and it is plain that, in such an operation, we must be wholly passive, and his gracious energy irresistible. It is only to this portion of the Spirit's work that these disputed phrases appear to be applicable; but in this use of them there is nothing incompatible with the free agency of man, or with a proper regard to the constitution of our nature. While we choose what we do, we act freely; our free agency is not at all affected by a change of our inclination, from whatever cause.

The particular operation of the Spirit which we have now described we hold to be regeneration, the quickening of a dead soul, the new creation of holy being. The terms life and death, when applied to our moral character, are but figurative, and are designed to illustrate the right or wrong state of the heart. A soul is alive if well disposed towards God, if alienated it is dead; a change of disposition, therefore, corresponding with this statement, is essentially regeneration. When life is thus produced, the functions of life are performed. The eye begins to see, the ear to hear, the palate to relish; hunger, thirst, pain, pleasure, activity, weakness, all make their appearance; and such, we think, is the rationale of the various and multiform affections which characterize, and often perplex, the young disciple. In these the Holy Spirit affords his aid, watching over the life he has produced, and cherishing all its operations; but in these we are not passive, nor is his grace irresistible. The essential characteristic of life is action, to which the Spirit stimulates, "working in us to will and to do." And the stimulus is applied in a manner consistent with our rational and voluntary nature, whether by internal suggestion, or by the instrumentality of outward means. It may be resisted, and

often is so; it is enforced by a system of discipline and correction only; which, however, through grace, operates as certainly to the cure and consummation of the spiritual being, as nourishment and medicine to the growth and health of the bodily frame. The immediate consequences of regeneration are to be traced in the exercise of repentance and faith; and its further practical result is conversion, a change altogether active and voluntary. This consists in abandoning iniquity in all its forms, and in unreservedly devoting ourselves to the service of God.

This view of the Spirit's work we conceive to be clear from the charge of representing regeneration as a physical change, which, undoubtedly, we do not believe it to be. We have just asserted the strictly active and voluntary nature of conversion, as a change induced by wisely adapted means, to which some divines would ascribe regeneration also, in this case considering them as one and the same. In this, however, we cannot concur. The figurative expressions employed have respect to appropriate realities, and, severally and consistently, to different aspects of a sinner's condition. Having been represented as turning from God, he is said to turn to God; but these are not states of moral sentiment, they are actions performed under its influence. Again, when represented as dead to God, he is affirmed also to be quickened, born again, or made alive; all which does refer to a state of moral sentiment. Here are, at all events, two very different things, and it is convenient to have them designated by different terms. We prefer, therefore (although we admit that the terms are not always used with this precision in Scripture), maintaining the distinction between regeneration and conversion. Means are, indeed, adapted to operate upon the heart, and doubtless would do so in the case before us, were it not that it is so desperately evil as to be placed, not beyond their proper application, but beyond their actual prevalence. There is, in a word, a total absence of love to God, an entire contrariety to him, infallibly rendering the use of means ineffectual, though not absurd. This being the case, the direct influence we have described is necessary, and is, in our view, strictly of a moral nature. It creates no new faculty of perception, sensibility, or choice; it makes no change in the physical condition of either of these powers; it simply alters the tone of moral sentiment. The change effected is

of the same nature with those which are, in other cases, effected by means of instruction and persuasion, and is therefore not a physical, but a moral one.

The blessed Spirit is sent into the hearts of sinners to effect the great and needful change. This, in point of fact, he does produce in some, in others he does not produce it; and hence arises a new feature of the work of redemption. In much that we have hitherto contemplated there has been a universality, here is a peculiarity. That is done for some which is not done for all. Nor can the difference be ascribed to man, but by denying the universal and total depravity of his nature, which we apprehend cannot be done. And if the difference be not of man, but of God, here is discrimination, or sovereignty. The nature of his conduct always indicates that of his purpose, according to which he acts; and hence, therefore, we argue a sovereign and discriminating purpose, or an election of grace. We deem this to be an appointment, not to outward privileges, but to spiritual blessings and eternal life. It is obvious, also, that, if the mission of the Holy Spirit into the heart of an individual be the precise object of discriminating grace, the Divine purpose must have individual reference to the persons whom it comprehends. Such an election is frequently asserted in the sacred Scriptures.

Election to eternal life, contemplated in the attitude in which we have thus placed it, seems to be free from the slightest appearance of injustice. So far from being unjust towards any, the blessed God is assuredly and unequivocally merciful to all. To suppose that justice requires an equal distribution of divine bounty, is absurd; since the distribution of bounty is not a matter of justice at all, but is in all cases most freely left to the good pleasure of the donor. On this ground the teacher sent from God distinctly places the exercise of sovereignty, in the parable of the lord of the vineyard. "Friend, I have done thee no wrong. May I not do what I will with mine own?" Every man maintains the force of this appeal in respect of his own bounty, and is bound to acknowledge it, therefore, in reference to God's.

But, if not unjust, is it not arbitrary and partial? It is undoubtedly discriminating, but in no evil sense is it partial, and not in any sense arbitrary. Every being of wisdom and goodness, even in the distribution of his bounty, pays regard

to wise and good ends; and so assuredly does the Almighty in selecting the vessels of mercy. It cannot, at present at least, be shown that he does not, nor are the discoveries of a future day likely to issue to his disadvantage.

After all, it is quite unintelligible why the doctrine of election to salvation should be unpleasing, when the same system is acted upon without complaint, or reasonable ground of complaint, in all other concerns. The ways of Providence exhibit as decisive marks of special favour, added in sovereignty to universal kindness, as those of redemption; nor can any other reason be given why all men are not equally rich and happy. Can the same system be both right and wrong? Or, if wrong in spiritual concerns, can it be right in temporals? If it were objected that the parallel is incomplete, inasmuch as the inequality of providential bounty is only temporary and probationary, while that under consideration is ultimate and eternal, we should answer by admitting the premises and denying the conclusion. It is true, that the everlasting and unchangeable results of our state of discipline attach to it a character in some respects peculiar, and unspeakably solemn; but it is not true that this circumstance destroys the completeness of the parallel which has been drawn, in the point in which it bears on the subject. The matter to be illustrated is the principle on which both systems manifestly and alike proceed, namely, an intended unequal distribution of unclaimable benefits. This may be more or less interesting according to the magnitude of the benefits conferred, but it is difficult to perceive how it can be more or less right. Other things remaining the same, it is inconceivable how a mere variation in the amount bestowed in different instances should turn wrong into right, or right into wrong. Right and wrong are not matters of magnitude, but are dependent on the relations of things. What our Lord affirmed respecting character, "He that is unjust in little is unjust also in much," seems to be quite as applicable to principles of action. A principle which is wrong when applied to great concerns, cannot be right in the smallest; nor, on the other hand, can we discern how one which is unexceptionable in limited and temporary affairs, can become, other things remaining the same, in ultimate and eternal ones an occasion of complaint.

If the objection has any force, however, it has too much.

It assumes that the unequal distribution of ultimate and eternal good is improper. It requires, therefore, that the final states of all men should be made exactly alike; for, unless this were done, the objection would still lie. We need not say to what consequences the objector might thus be driven, and cannot but think that an argument must be fallacious which would demand, not only that no man, however criminal, should perish, but that all men, of whatever character, should be possessed of equal felicity; which would deny to the righteous Governor the just treatment of wilful transgressors, and would forbid the exercise of his gracious sovereignty, one of his most glorious prerogatives, in the most glorious of its aspects. Let us only imagine how his conduct would appear, if he were to act upon this assumption, and, with reference to ultimate good, to abandon the system of unequal distribution. To say nothing of the exclusion of his sovereignty (the ground, however, on which it is to be demonstrated that all the glory of eternal good is due to himself alone), what a reflection would thus be cast upon all the other parts of his ways! In everything else he has shown himself a sovereign, here he hesitates to do so. He has been acting in lesser matters on a principle which he cannot carry into great ones. He has been dispensing the benefits of time in a method so questionable, so little worthy of himself, that he adopts a new one the moment those are to be distributed which pertain to eternity. So to change his system with respect to the future, could scarcely be less than to condemn the past. But such a state of things is surely inconceivable. Nothing can be equal to his name, but to act throughout on a principle one and uniform; to adopt methods in time which are worthy of immortality, and in which the brightest light of eternity shall discover nothing but the excellency and glory of the "only wise God."

There is a fallacy in the very attempt to distinguish between temporal and eternal benefits. To whatever extent such a distinction may appear to exist, it is certain that all the ways of God towards men have relation to a future world. All the circumstances of time transmit influences into eternity, and they are designed to do so. Now, as they thus affect our final condition, even temporal benefits partake of an ultimate and eternal character; and it can be no

more proper to bestow unequally favours which influence what is unchangeable, than unchangeable favours themselves. So that, if it be indefensible to adopt an unequal distribution of spiritual benefits, it is equally so to allow inequality in reference to providential good, since neither can be separated from the awful future to which mankind are destined.

In the feeling excited by the solemn nature of eternal results we most deeply sympathize; but it operates in a wrong direction when it suggests such a topic as that which we have just noticed. Its appropriate bearing is, surely, not to induce complaint of God, but to excite activity in ourselves; an end most profitable, but for which, alas! it is far less frequently and less forcibly contemplated.

It may be observed, too, that there is a rational method in which men reconcile themselves to the inequalities of Divine Providence. They know that the paths of success are open to all; that the goodness of God, if not equal, is universal; and that a blessing generally attends the exercise of diligence, and the use of well-adapted means. All these topics are more emphatically applicable to the dispensations of divine grace; nor can we conceive any reason why they are not as effectual to inspire grateful contentment, but that men feel a greater aversion to the necessary activity in the latter case, than they do in the former.

It has often been said, indeed, chiefly by those who wished to rid themselves of the doctrine by putting it into bad company, that election and reprobation are necessarily connected, and must stand or fall together. But the statement is fallacious. It is most true that the Divine Being does, and it is necessary that he should, reprobate, that is, disapprove, ungodly men; but, that he determined originally to condemn and punish any man purely of his sovereign pleasure, is a fiction which we hold in detestation, surpassed only by what the more blessed spirits feel who know more than ourselves of his glory. Punishment, in truth, is a matter not at all within the sphere of divine sovereignty; it belongs exclusively to the province of justice, and is never inflicted or contemplated but in the exercise of that principle. Election, on the contrary, refers exclusively to the communication of benefits over and above all that is necessary to make the dispensations of God towards every man both equitable and kind. We have no wish to deny, that, in the special exer-

cise of favour towards the elect, he omitted the rest of mankind; but let the condition of that omitted portion be examined, and it will be found to be, as we have already stated, without exception, a state of most merciful and blessed hope, in which every man's salvation is put into his own hands. Is this reprobation?

As the condemnation of the ungodly proceeds upon a regard to their evil works, it has been thought by some that the discriminating exercises of grace are dictated by the foreseen worthiness of their objects, God electing those who would repent. This idea, however, appears inadmissible; since it supposes the spontaneous origination of holy exercises in an unholy heart, and calls in question the scriptural doctrine of the entire depravity of our nature. Of himself no man will repent. As for the connected hypothesis, that a measure of divine influence is given to every man to profit withal, it is one to which resort has been had solely for the purpose of placing mankind in a state of equitable responsibility, with which some notions of human corruption are inconsistent.

Election to salvation, as a portion of the purposes of God, must be held to be eternal. All his purposes are so; and for any of them to be otherwise would indicate either a natural deficiency, or a voluntary neglect. As contemplating something which he himself would do, it is wholly, as we have already shown, within the province of predestination. It by no means follows, however, that the persons elected existed from all eternity; a notion which is equally false in fact, and uncalled for in theory. It is, indeed, and well it may be, characteristic of God, to call things which are not as though they were; but it is surely undeniable that no man exists till he is brought into actual being, and that until then he cannot be in any supposable condition of good or ill. God has elected a people from eternity; in time he brings them into being, and then their existence is modified by evil or by good. It follows that none of the privileges which result from election are possessed previously to this life, and that the notion of God's people being eternally justified is one of the wildest imaginations. To say that all this is done eternally in God's purpose, and therefore done virtually, is to say merely that God eternally purposed to do it, which is true; but everybody knows that, when a thing is said to be

virtually done, it is precisely to show that really it is not done—that is to say, it is not done at all.

To allege that the acts of the divine mind are eternal and immanent, and that therefore justification must be eternal, is to overlook the true nature of justification itself. It is an act, not of the divine mind, but of the divine government. The term necessarily belongs to a judicial system, and stands related to law, obedience, and condemnation. Now the divine government is manifestly not from all eternity. It is a system of operations, having a commencement and progress; and as a part of it, therefore, justification is a transaction of time, and not of eternity. In this view it is clearly distinguishable from the love of God, which doubtless was in exercise from everlasting, and of which justification, like every other benefit, is a fruit.

The love exercised in the election of grace is of the nature of benevolence, and not of complacency; a conclusion necessarily resulting from the fact of its being exerted on behalf of sinful beings, towards whom the latter emotion cannot be felt by a holy one. But the same truth may be derived from other sources. Benevolence is the love which constitutes the essence of Deity, and of which redemption is to exhibit the illustrious glory. This, also, is the grand active principle of the divine nature, which complacency is not; nor is it active at all, but leads rather to rest than to exertion, except as awakening benevolence. Hence, therefore, there can be no reason to think, nor occasion to suppose, that the elect, before their conversion, are in a condition different from others; benevolence having been exercised towards all, and if towards some more than others, only in a way of purpose and previous arrangement, which come into no real operation without the changes of character universally required.

Once more, it is obvious that election to life is by no means, in the order of nature, antecedent, but subsequent to, the moral government of God. We say in the order of nature, because in the order of time there could be no difference, the plan and purpose of both being eternal; but, in reference to the former, it is to be conceived that the Almighty first determined on the establishment of his moral government, and then, foreseeing the transgression and ruin of man, purposed in himself to redeem the lost. For without the ruin of man, where could have been the recovery? Had there

been no moral government, nor creatures under its condemnation, there would have been no scope for the exercise of redeeming love, whether general or particular. It is therefore a partial and crippled view of redemption to represent it as wholly originating in, and founded upon, the election of grace; this is itself only a secondary portion of that glorious work, which contemplates the vast wretchedness of a condemned and ruined world.

The object, then, of the discriminating exercise of divine love, and the only part of the system of redemption which is under its influence, unless the measure in which the outward means of grace are enjoyed be considered as another exception, is the unsought gift and administration of the Holy Spirit. It appears reasonable, however, as all divine operations have a real and adequate foundation, that this also should have an appropriate basis, superadded to that on which the state of universal probation is grounded; and here, accordingly, we advert more particularly to the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, which appears in many passages of the Divine Word to be unequivocally asserted. We gather from such declarations that, for a portion of mankind, the sheep, the chosen, Christ died as a personal and actual substitute; thus laying the foundation of their certain salvation, and of the peculiar administration of the Spirit by which it should be effected.

From the connection in which we have placed this doctrine, it will be apparent that we do not consider it as entering into the meritorious cause of salvation. As a general expedient of the divine government, and as conditionally beneficial to transgressors, namely, through faith, the death of Christ forms a proper and sufficient ground for the salvation of every man upon believing, and affords a satisfactory warrant for every one to believe in him. If, in addition to this, there is a specific number towards whom he assumes the relation of a personal or actual substitute, irrespectively of their faith, it is not to establish a more proper method for their being saved upon believing, but to secure the exercise of faith itself, by forming a basis for the unsought communication of the Spirit. The transaction, therefore, is connected, not with the meritorious, but solely with the efficient cause of salvation; not with the adaptation of the death of Christ,

but with the administration of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary for a sinner, when seeking deliverance from condemnation, to plead the personal substitution of Christ for him; neither is it possible, since it is not a matter revealed, and cannot therefore be known to him. Like election, it is secret; that is, it is known only to the sacred three who are engaged in the work of redemption, and to whom it affords appropriately, either a motive or a plea, or a ground of action, during the impenitent state of the chosen seed.

In this view salvation is unconditional. Wheresoever it is actually enjoyed, it results from covenant engagements and gracious operations of the blessed Trinity, the fulfilment of which was not suspended upon any thing to be performed by man; the object of them being in fact, and of necessity (if they were to be successful), to work in men to will and to do whatever is requisite to the attainment of eternal life. This sentiment is clear and unquestionable, and it is of importance that it should be distinctly and decidedly maintained. But it is not by any means inconsistent with what has been elsewhere advanced, that repentance and faith are conditions with which salvation is connected. This phraseology has been, in some quarters, strongly objected to; but, with the utmost readiness not to contend for words, we do not feel justified in abandoning it, because we do not know how otherwise to express a just and important idea. Nor is it necessary to drop it. Every one is acquainted with the distinction between *conditio propter quod*, and *conditio sine quâ non;* or between the meritorious condition, and the instrumental. In reference to salvation, as the death of Christ is undisputedly the former, repentance and faith are unquestionably the latter. The fact is, that salvation, in different views, is both conditional and unconditional. As contemplated in the probationary administration of mercy, it is strictly conditional; that is to say, it is so connected with dispositions to be exercised by us, that without them we cannot be saved: but, as comprehended in the system of gracious operation, it is wholly unconditional, the blessed Spirit proceeding to his purpose whether men will or not, and making them willing in the day of his power.

As the conversion of sinners is thus in the most glorious and effectual manner secured, so a ground is clearly established for maintaining the final perseverance of saints. They

are one with Christ, who is their personal representative and surety.

Spiritual life, indeed, is in its own nature immortal, and persevering grace will never be withheld from those who seek it. But in addition to this, if the bringing of many sons unto glory were the joy set before our Saviour in his sufferings (and nothing less could be a recompense), a security for their certain arrival there must be a necessary part of the arrangement; nor is it conceivable that the love which had influenced the Most High to select them for such a purpose, and to purchase them at such a price, would suffer any thing to prevent the accomplishment of the design. It is not to be supposed, that this security refers to the ultimate happiness of the elect apart from their holiness. These two elements can never be separated in fact, and ought not to be so by the waywardness of the human heart. That which the love of God secures to his people is salvation, a term which essentially comprises all that is holy, faithful, and obedient, as well as all that is happy and privileged; all that constitutes the way, as well as that which crowns the end. Though the elect will certainly be saved, no man will or can be saved in unbelief, or in sin. The provision for the combination of these two principles is fully within the competency of divine wisdom, and will presently appear.

It is not judicious to pry too curiously into final causes; yet we may venture a remark or two upon the ultimate object of the special part of the work of redemption. Unquestionably, like the universal portion, it is an exercise of mercy towards the persons comprehended in it; but, as there would have been no occasion or scope for its operation had it not been for the total depravity of our nature, which would have rendered the whole scheme of redemption void of actual benefit, so we are led to conclude that its ultimate objects are, by securing the actual salvation of some, to exalt the glory of divine love, and to ensure a recompense to the Saviour of the world for the humiliation and anguish involved in the work he has undertaken. Both these causes conspire to swell the tide of mercy, which flows to the chosen with boundless fulness, to the glory of the Father and the honour of the Son. Should it be asked why the election of grace was not then more ample, embracing the whole world rather than a part,

it might be replied, that, as it has pleased God to introduce into operation two excellent systems of distinct character, so the boundary between them is such as it has seemed to him good to define. It is by no means true, however, that the elect are few. They are, on the contrary, many; as any one may find who will begin his calculation with the item that this class comprehends all who die in infancy, being more than half the race of mankind. And little doubt can be entertained, that the day of final discovery will show the company of ungodly men to be, comparatively, as insignificant in their number, as deep in their guilt, and awful in their doom.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Present Results of the Dispensation of Mercy.

HAVING thus come to a point at which the existence of believers in the Lord Jesus may be assumed, we proceed to speak of the state into which they are brought.

This, in its primary aspect, is a state of glorious privilege. But, as we have already shown that all men are equally welcome to salvation through Christ, so here we may add, that, in his conduct towards the elect, the Divine Being departs from none of the general principles of the probationary system; the peculiarity of his love appears only in producing conformity to them.

In enumerating the privileges of true Christians, we give the first place to pardon; a blessing which is intimately connected with justification, but has been very needlessly and improperly confounded with it. Justification is a judicial act; forgiveness is a personal one. It has reference to the aspect of sin towards God as an act of unkindness, ingratitude, and dishonour. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that he resents the indignity, or that he is inflamed to anger by the provocations of human iniquity. His wrath, on the contrary, is wholly judicial; his personal feelings towards offenders are of unchanged benevolence. But, as a holy

God, he is, and must necessarily be, displeased with sinners; and the expressed cessation of this feeling of holy displeasure is forgiveness. This is manifestly necessary to our happiness, and a part of salvation. It has already been shown how the mediation of Christ operates to this end, and it is to the same aspect of things that the embassy of peace belongs, beseeching us to be reconciled to God. In this view the forgiveness of sins is a privilege to be sought by repentance, the state of mind with which it is appropriately connected. It is clear also, that every subsequent transgression presents fresh occasion both for repentance and forgiveness, for which the basis on which the divine friendship is restored to us adequately provides.

The next among Christian privileges is justification. This we conceive to be an act of the Divine Being as the universal judge, and to contemplate the aspect of sin towards his government. Sin is not merely an offence against God personally, but a transgression of the law; and condemnation and death, therefore, are its direct consequences. Hence, in addition to our reconciliation to God, our relation to his government must be changed, and the sentence of death be annulled. It is plain also, that to be justified, or declared righteous, is the only way of escaping unhurt from a strict judicial process. Pardon, though mixed with the proceedings of earthly judicatures, is essentially extra-judicial, and is totally excluded from the righteous judgment of God by its perfect wisdom and inflexible justice. If any man passes in safety from the bar of the Almighty, it can be only as declared righteous, or justified. But every man must appear there as a convicted criminal, a character from which, in the direct method, such an issue is undoubtedly at the utmost distance. Hence, therefore, the necessity, the adaptation, and the value, of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his obedience unto death, is become "the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Here, too, become evident the instrumentality and importance of faith (or an acquiescence in the way of salvation), as the disposition with which justification is connected; for the righteousness of Christ is imputed to a sinner upon believing in his name, and the eternal Judge henceforth holds him righteous, and treats him as though he had never sinned.

If this be a correct view of justification, it is obvious that

the privilege must be attained by faith, and by faith alone. An examination of character upon judicial principles admits of no compromise, nor of any medium between criminality and innocence, righteousness and guilt, justification and condemnation. According to its regular course, none but the innocent can be justified, and all who are criminal must be condemned. If we are subject to condemnation for a breach of the law, to adduce topics of extenuation, or of good desert, is plainly irrelevant, and must be ineffectual. The requisite object is to attain righteousness. Nothing else promises any benefit; and this can be accomplished only by availing ourselves of the representative system which the mercy of God has introduced. He is willing judicially to treat us in the name and person of another (in that, namely, of his Son), instead of our own; provision being made for transferring our guilt, or liability to punishment, to him, and his legal righteousness, or title to justification, to us. In order to act upon this arrangement he awaits our consent to it, which is faith. Faith, therefore, is manifestly the direct and exclusive instrument of our justification; and its exercise implies the abandonment of every plea which could have been derived from our own character. Good works, however, though quite irrelevant to the justification of a sinner, inevitably spring from faith (which opens the heart to the influence of all the motives adapted to produce them), and answer the important purpose of proving its existence and sincerity.

In reference to the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there has not unnaturally arisen a difficulty, similar to that which has been already noticed in connection with the sin of Adam. But it is only necessary to repeat, that, though actions and their desert cannot be transferred, they may be imputed to a second person, as a ground for treating him as though they were his own. Righteousness may sometimes denote actual rectitude of conduct; but the term is also used as the antithesis of guilt. And, as guilt is the state of a person who either has committed, or is legally held to have committed, a crime; so righteousness, in this sense, is the state of one who either is, or is legally held to be, innocent. Righteousness, like guilt, therefore, is to be considered as either personal or judicial, either moral or legal. Guilt, in the former sense, is desert of blame; in the latter, liability to punishment. In like manner, in the former sense, righteous-

ness is desert of approbation; in the latter, it is a title to justification. In the former sense, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believing sinner; in the latter it is transferred. Attention to these distinctions will tend to divest the subject of its perplexity.

The privilege which has been described is one of the highest value, both in itself and in its consequences. For a sinner to be held righteous by the divine government, and to be treated as such, with all the friendship, complacency, and honour, which might be hoped for by a being who had never sinned, and to be thus additionally open to all the communications of blessedness which may flow from the exercise of the Divine Father's love to his Son, through whom we are justified, is a felicity of the most extraordinary and exalted kind. And it is acquired once for all. As the heart is the immediate subject of the divine government, so the question of justification refers, not to the conduct apart from the heart, but as illustrative of it; not primarily to individual actions, but to the cherished disposition. We are arraigned, not for specific acts of rebellion, but for being rebels; and if, on this grand point, held to be righteous, our affairs with the divine government are permanently set at rest, the new state to which we are introduced preserving us from ever again bearing such a character. Justification, therefore, is never to be repeated.

Added to these privileges is sanctification. By this we mean the active and progressive influence of divine truth, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, in moulding the affections and conduct according to the will of God. Upon this subject, which has been much perplexed and perverted, distinction and distinctness are of great importance. Christ is made unto us sanctification; but it is strictly by the motives arising from his death. The Spirit is our sanctifier; but it is by opening our hearts to feel and to act under the influence of the love of Christ. The new creature is essentially holy; a truth also, inasmuch as the new creation consists in a right disposition, or love to God, which is the real spring of all holy conduct: but no one is a holy person further than this disposition operates on him, and animates his actions. The new creature is as holy now as ever it will be; this likewise is undeniable, since, although many things may be right or wrong, nothing can be more or less right. The new creature

is simply a right disposition, which can never be more right than it is. But holiness is not to be confined to the new creature; it is to extend to the whole man. We are not only to be rightly disposed towards God and man, but to feel and to act always correspondingly; and this we may obviously do in a greater or smaller degree. Sanctification, thus understood, is provided for by regeneration, which renders the heart tenderly susceptible to the influence of holy considerations; and by faith, which brings them into immediate contact with it. To be thus sanctified is to become like God, both in character and felicity, and is, both in itself and its associations, an invaluable attainment.

The state of privilege into which believers are brought, is characterised also by exalted favour. It is this which many of the metaphors drawn from human life are employed to illustrate; as when the terms shepherd, brother, father, husband, and many others, are used to describe the relation existing between the people of God and their Redeemer. It is not necessary to notice these individually. Suffice it to say that the love of God, in all its practical results, is exercised towards his saints without any other limits than such as are prescribed by his wisdom in communicating good, and their capacity to receive it. He "giveth grace and glory."

We have already stated the grounds upon which this state of favour may be considered as not only ample, but secure. On the case of extreme backsliders, which has been thought to present a difficulty of appalling, if not of insurmountable magnitude, we suggest the following observations. It is certain that God hates, and will punish, sin in his people; but we do not see the proofs that the commission of sin is of itself incompatible with the existence, either of spiritual life, or of a state of friendship with God. If it be so, it must be so in every case, whether the sin be greater or smaller, since the difference can be only in degree, and not in principle; and yet we suppose none would maintain this. If it be not so always, the circumstances which stamp it with this character in any given instance must be peculiar, and ought to be both well defined in themselves, and clearly exhibited to us. The diverse powers of flesh and spirit, which alternately assume such a comparative, and sometimes apparently exclusive ascendancy, appear capable of affording a solution equally of moderate and of extreme cases; while, if friendship with

God be established on any adequate basis, it must unquestionably preclude the necessity of a measure so foreign from its nature as an exercise of judicial severity. The tendency to presumptuous confidence is sufficiently checked, by maintaining the obvious truth that no man is entitled to judge favourably of his state further than existing evidence may authorize him; and the effectual mortification of sin may be safely confided to the divine methods of correction.

The condition of Christians is not characterized by privilege alone. It is a state also of subjection to authority. Believers are, indeed, emphatically declared to be delivered from the law, and to be no more subject, either to its actual curse, or its systematic sanctions. God does not govern his people on legal or judicial principles; but he still governs them. And as nothing can ever liberate a rational creature from the obligation of love to its creator, so there is nothing in the system of mercy which tends, either to do so in fact, or to produce this impression; in every part, on the contrary, it conduces to revive and deepen the sense of that obligation, while it adds innumerable and overwhelming motives in the same direction, drawn from the wonders of redeeming love. Nor are there any indications that the Almighty no longer wishes this obligation to be felt. The whole structure of the Gospel proves the contrary; for, as, on the one hand, he has so framed it as to touch all the springs of action in the breast of man, so, on the other, he actually requires the exhibition of their influence. He still speaks of duty and commands, and urges every motive onward to its practical result. Neither is there wanting a system of sanctions, although not judicial ones; since, by modifying in correspondence with our conduct the communications of his favour and the consolations of his Spirit, he has a thousand ways of chastising the iniquity of his people. Finally, our heavenly Father maintains over his family a most holy and determined system of corrective discipline. Not, indeed, that he will in any instance make bare for his children the destroyer's sword; but he exercises a paternal discipline, which is much more moving and effective to every filial heart, and therefore to his whole family. Whoever is insensible to it, and feels no motive to holiness unless he is threatened with condemnation for sin, is still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Consummation of the Dispensation of Mercy.

THE distinction between the godly and the ungodly is wide during life; and, in the events which occur at its close, though the two classes have a common interest, they have still a different issue.

The first of these events is death. This we have seen to be a part of the original curse for transgression, retained under the dispensation of mercy. There is no reason to think that, at any period, the term death has been understood of a cessation of being. Immortality seems to be, if not a necessary, yet a certain property of the soul of man, and the fact of future existence to be intimately involved in all the divine conduct towards him; but more especially is this requisite if the present life be justly viewed as a state of probation, since such a system requires some day of reckoning and retribution. Death is the selected mode of our entrance on the world to come, for which the body in its present state appears altogether unsuited. This world is material, that is spiritual; accordingly, "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." We have said the selected mode rather than the necessary one, because its adoption is not from necessity, but from choice. Some men have been, and others therefore might have been, transferred and changed without death, as it appears those will be who are alive at the coming of the Lord. It is, however, chosen as the general method, doubtless because best adapted to the benefit of men and the glory of God.

Both saints and sinners die; but how differently! Not that death is in itself desirable to a saint; but he approaches it without any reason for dismay, cheered by present consolations, and animated by glorious hopes; while to the ungodly it is full of anguish and despair, and not the less truly so in its result for the insensibility which may precede its occurrence.

There appears sufficient reason to believe that departed spirits do not slumber. Their consciousness and activity, far from being impaired, must be considered as greatly invigorated

by emancipation from the body; and each, according to his character, must be held at once to enter on a corresponding state of joy or woe.

The second of the events to which we have referred is the resurrection of the body. This in itself might well be regarded as impossible, but to do so now would be to "err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." It is certain, moreover, that our probationary state would not be complete without it, since the body has entered into the activity of this life, and must not be excluded from the retribution of the next. There can be no doubt but the resurrection of the righteous is a glorious result of the work of Christ; but it appears also that the resurrection of the body universally should be viewed in the same light. "I," said the Saviour, "am the Resurrection." And as, on the one hand, no man had been at all in a state of probationary existence, to which the resurrection of the body belongs, were it not for the death of Christ; so, on the other, in whatever case the dominion of death is destroyed, as it actually is in the resurrection of the body, it would seem impossible to refer it to any other cause.

Much curious and difficult speculation may be indulged, respecting the nature of the change wrought upon the body in its resurrection. It must of course be the same body; but what constitutes human, or even corporeal, identity? If it is but negatively that we can answer this extremely difficult question, we can in this manner answer certainly, that it requires by no means the presence of the same particles of matter; it being a well established fact, that the absorbent system causes the removal of every particle of matter in every animate body, within the space of a very few years, without interfering in the least with its identity. Perhaps nothing less improbable can be said, than that identity is constituted by the existence of some occult principle of vitality, like that by virtue of which the seed cast into the ground, though we sow not that body which shall be, is yet identical with that which springs from its dissolution. So much at least is certain, that the body will become as truly adapted to the properties of the world of spirits, as it now is to its present abode.

The effects of the resurrection, of course, will be widely

different. Its immediate result will be the reunion with its own body of every departed spirit, to reconstitute human beings. It is natural to suppose that the moral character and condition of each will appear strongly marked upon the then spiritual body, modified accordingly to an aspect of beauty or deformity, of joy or woe; for the saints, it is enough to know that theirs shall be fashioned like the glorified body of their Lord.

As the resurrection is preparatory to the consummation of the probationary state, the last judgment will immediately succeed it. This will be a scene of unimaginable sublimity, occupying the intermediate region between earth, hell, and heaven; and introduced by the personal appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the appointed judge, in all the pomp of the upper world. But our object is not description. Suffice it to say that every human being must appear there, and that all who have been moral agents must give an account of their deeds; others being graciously provided for by the merciful dispensation under which they came into being. Of moral agents there will be two classes; those who by faith are justified, and those who have lived and died in disobedience. The government is righteously administered in respect of both; the one receiving the condemnation due, and the other being held and treated as righteous, on the principles already shown to be in full accordance with the divine government. Such is the judicial process. But something remains in regard to the personal character of the Almighty, and in order to show the wisdom and congruity of the heavenly and eternal rewards he is about to bestow on his people; for which end he will exhibit the generous attachment and devotedness of their character.

The grand design of the last day, therefore, is "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" which being accomplished, the final and everlasting states will be entered upon. That of the wicked, though represented as unutterably wretched, will not partake of the nature of personal wrath, or malevolence. The anger which inflicts the punishment, like the punishment itself, being strictly judicial, its severity will be wholly subject to its equity. It appears to have two principal sources, denominated by our Lord "the worm" and "the fire;" the former indicating a spirit of self-reproach, the latter, a consciousness of divine displeasure. To these

may be added the collateral influence of unholy dispositions, of society stimulating the malignant feelings, and the aggravations of evil spirits; all operating with a vigour unknown, save to immortals loosed from mortal bonds. That this should be everlasting is, indeed, most dreadful; but as, on the one hand, it is impossible to see how any change can follow the final consummation of a probationary state, so, on the other, it is no less difficult to conceive how those who for ever sin should not for ever suffer.

The state of the righteous presents a most delightful contrast. They are "present with the Lord," in the immediate residence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, there is reason to believe, will be the centre both of emanation and attraction, in his person exhibiting the beatific vision of the Godhead. As the abode of finite beings, heaven must of necessity be a place; but we apprehend it will not be earth, and we cannot imagine that mere locality, however glorious, can constitute its essential happiness. It is as a state that it is blessed; a state of enlarged knowledge, of consummate purity, of intimate friendship with God, of sacred activity, and gracious reward. Such is the true import of the metaphorical language employed by the inspired writers, and such a state is obviously adapted to yield the highest conceivable felicity to a person rightly disposed; a qualification, indeed, of the utmost necessity, and one of which the absence would render it impossible for an unregenerate man to be happy in heaven, even were he there. The blessedness of this state is augmented by a release from all the sorrows and dangers of this world, and crowned by the assurance of its uninterrupted and endless duration.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the Administration of the Dispensation of Mercy.

To this place, for the sake of distinctness, we have reserved a subordinate part of the divine conduct, not affecting the dispensation of mercy itself, but the mode in which its prin-

ciples have been developed. It may be called historical theology, as descriptive of the methods in which God has exhibited the truths of his Gospel. In these, though there is much diversity, there is also an entire unity, inasmuch as all men are in a common ruin, and are dealt with by the Almighty for a common end, and on common principles. Christianity, therefore, if not quite as old as the creation, is very nearly so, having been revealed in its fundamental truths, and brought into systematic operation, immediately after the fall.

In the first instance, the preservation and communication of religious knowledge were entrusted to the father of mankind, and, after him, to the father of every family; and this constitutes the patriarchal dispensation, which existed till the incorporation of the Israelitish nation. The light which shone in this primary system was probably greater than is now generally supposed, and might be drawn from an intelligent view of the promise couched in the serpent's curse, from the very significant institution of sacrifices, which was attended no doubt with sufficient explanations, and from the habitual communication held by God with the world through angelic messengers or inspired men. Mankind were, therefore, by no means left to themselves; and the gross ignorance and superstition which are observable in the past and present state of heathen nations, are not to be considered as imperfections attaching to the discoveries of unfortunate inquirers groping after truth, but rather as the thick darkness in which they wilfully buried themselves, "their foolish heart being darkened, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Hence may be derived two general observations. First, that the means of religious knowledge in the earliest ages were amply sufficient to establish the system of moral probation we have described. Responsibility, of course, is always proportioned to advantages; but even then men were "without excuse." Secondly, that the religious instruction then vouchsafed was universal. There was no peculiarity till long after the flood. Hence, accordingly, remnants of early tradition appear among every people, and hence all are still in possession of some real rudiments of divine knowledge, however mutilated and disguised. We do not say that this affords any practical hope of their salvation; but it illustrates

the ways of God towards them, and is the point of view in which their state appears least dark and mysterious.

When, through the increase of mankind and the corresponding prevalence of iniquity, the patriarchal system was found inadequate to preserve, in sufficient purity and force, the truths of religion, preparation was made for a more magnificent and effective dispensation. For this purpose Abram, an inhabitant of Chaldea, was brought into particular notice, and made a principal party in some most interesting and important transactions. The immediate and primary intention of his call was to make his posterity, as a nation, the instrument of preserving and exhibiting religious truth, an object which could no longer be wisely confided to heads of families. Families having become nations, the patriarchal gave way to a national system; not, be it again observed, of religion, but merely of religious instruction—a distinction which we are the more desirous to impress upon our readers, because it has become so common to speak of the Jewish nation as a church, and to consider their establishment as the institution of a religious body. The subsequent facts correspond with our idea. It was first necessary to constitute a nation, and one separate in its formation, and prepared to be separate afterwards, from all other people; for which ends the children of Israel sojourned in Egypt—as shepherds, that the Egyptians might be estranged from them, and as bondsmen, that they might be alienated from the Egyptians. When incorporated into a nation, every means adapted to human nature was adopted to preserve them a peculiar people, and to withhold them from idolatry, not so much in its spiritual import, as in the external act. This is the rationale of a great part of the ceremonial law, the enactments of which, sometimes apparently frivolous, gain undeniable propriety and importance from the fact of their being directed against idolatrous practices of surrounding nations. As a people, the Israelites were then made the depository of all existing religious knowledge, which Moses recorded in their sacred books, while more ample communications were graciously made during the course of their political existence, and a large number of emblems, comprising both facts and ceremonies, were connected with their national constitution. God was their direct temporal sove-

reign. As such, the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, was his palace; the priests were his ministers; the whole of the temple service was the honour done him by his subjects; and all this, with the cities of refuge and many other institutions, was emblematical of the way of salvation by the sacrifice of Christ, and of the gracious dominion to which believers are subjected. In our opinion, all this was strictly and exclusively emblematical; not involving any spiritual relation of God to the nation, and not implying in them, nor requiring of them, any spiritual feeling towards him. The promise made to Abraham, "I will be a god to thee, and to thy seed after thee," whatever may be its supposable import, seems thus to have been fulfilled in the only sense in which the facts of the case allow it to be understood; for, to the seed of his friend as such, Jehovah was not a god in any but a temporal view. This interpretation has been strongly objected to; but we beg all unsatisfied parties to refer to an admirable and decisive essay on the subject, by the late Rev. John Erskine, D.D., in his Theological Dissertations.

From the opinion now expressed it follows, of course, that the covenant made with Abraham for his posterity was not the covenant of grace, and that none of its institutions are in themselves of a religious character, but that they are essentially and exclusively emblematical of things as essentially and exclusively spiritual. Our readers will perhaps feel, although we shall not pursue, the bearing of this position on the controversies respecting national churches and infant baptism.

We have said that the design of forming the Israelitish nation, was both to preserve and to exhibit religious truth; to the latter of which ideas it may be thought an objection, that Jewish privileges were exclusively confined to the descendants of Abraham. But let Jewish be distinguished from religious privileges, and the objection will vanish. True religion and spiritual benefits were unquestionably not so confined; nor were the means of religious knowledge, as is shown clearly by the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, and by the ideas which heathen antiquity appears to have derived from the sacred fountains. Inhabitants of all nations were welcome to inquire, "Watchman, what of the night?" And the reply was encouraging—"If ye will inquire, inquire ye: come again."

The formation of his posterity into a nation for the purpose described, was doubtless a distinguished honour conferred upon Abraham; and, although this was the only exercise of it which respected his descendants as such, the friendship of God towards him showed itself by further personal favours. Such was the birth of the Messiah in his family, and the declaration that he should be the father of many nations, and that all nations should be blessed in him, that is, in his seed, which is Christ. This language is fulfilled in two ways: first, by the fact that Abraham was the first person pointed out as the progenitor of the Messiah; secondly, by his faith in Christ being made the illustrious example for all future ages, which gives him a moral elevation, as "the father of all them that believe." To this it may be added, that larger numbers of his posterity than of any other nation would doubtless be included in the church of God.

As the method of preserving and exhibiting truth by the constitution and frame-work of a nation superseded the patriarchal system, so it introduced the Christian; a dispensation under which the same truths are taught without emblems, and are presented in the fullest light, and in the utmost simplicity, to every man by his brother, as called and taught of God. This is the last, "the dispensation of the fulness of times;" and will usher in the millennial period, and the end of all things.

Under this dispensation the true worshippers of God are, for the first time in the history of the world, required to unite themselves in an association founded on this peculiarity of their character. A company of professed believers in Christ thus united in his name has come to be technically denominated a church, and the whole multitude of such societies (with more or less extensive deviations, however, from the evangelical model) constitute the visible church of Christ in the world.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Execution of the Dispensation of Mercy.

In these wonderful and gracious proceedings towards mankind, it is obvious that the Most High has made developments of his character for which no other circumstances than those of human guilt and misery could have afforded an opportunity. Originally, equity and benevolence, justice and goodness, were in harmonious and delightful operation; the glory of redemption is to have reunited them when by sin divided, and to exhibit "a just God and a Saviour." Besides this, however, the manner of the divine proceeding in this illustrious work presents a peculiarity of which some notice must be taken.

It has doubtless been observed, that we have incidentally spoken of the several persons in the Divine Trinity, not merely as acting separately to the promotion of a common end, but as acting upon, or towards, one another; a kind of phraseology which abounds in the Holy Scriptures, and without the use of which it is altogether impossible to discourse of the work of redemption. But what can be the meaning of such language? The question is more easily asked than answered. We do not, however, shrink from it. And we begin by saying, that, whatever be its meaning, it cannot be interpreted in any manner inconsistent with the entire unity of the Godhead, or the essential divinity, glory, and equality of all the persons in this incomprehensible Being. This is a settled point; with which if the terms employed should appear inconsistent, the apparent inconsistency must be referred to the inaptitude of mortal tongues to immortal themes.

The phraseology in question is in part, though not altogether, peculiar to the operations of mercy. The works of creation are ascribed variously to each or to either of the divine persons; but, in relation to these, there does not appear the exercise of authority, and the subordination, which present themselves in the work of redemption. Was there, then, any thing peculiar in the circumstances of the case, to which this mode of proceeding may be regarded as appropriate? There was plainly so. The evils to be remedied

had broken out under the dominion of God himself, and their direct aspect was towards his moral government, and himself as the governor. This grand and leading character modified all others that he sustained, and affected the whole of his conduct; if he took any part, therefore, in the salvation of mankind, it must be as the governor and the judge. It is manifest, however, that he could not save sinners as governor and judge merely, but that there was a necessity for the adoption of some expedient, which he might sanction, but which he could not personally carry into effect. Now, the second and third persons in the trinity were not thus controlled; they were open to the influence of an arrangement, under which the office and functions of moral governor should be specially represented and performed by the eternal Father, leaving other characters to be borne, and other parts to be taken, by the Son and the Spirit. Such an arrangement implies neither impossibility nor absurdity; the fact of its existence is incorporated with the texture of many passages of Scripture; and it affords a satisfactory view of the subordination of the Son and Spirit, as official merely and not essential, as connected with the work of redemption alone, and not with the nature of the Godhead. The facts correspond with this idea. The Father uniformly acts as the supreme ruler, from whose authority every thing emanates, and by whose sanction every thing is valid. He sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. It is he also who justifies them that believe; and Christ "is *of God* made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Our Lord Jesus Christ acts as under his Father's commission, and appears bent upon finishing his work; while the Holy Spirit, the basis for whose operation is laid by the combined influence of the Son's work and the Father's pleasure, is declared to be sent by both. The same observation may be made respecting the personal aspect of man's condition towards God; his holiness requires mediation, and this must be exercised by a third party. In this view also, the design of reconciliation originates with the Father, who sends his Son as the great ambassador of peace, the Spirit being employed conjointly by both to secure the success of his mission. And, finally, the same idea, on similar grounds, applies to the exercise of discriminating grace; the saints being elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit.

The distinction of office and operation, then, is strictly appropriate to the nature of the object to be attained; and it surely is not to be supposed that such arrangements could be formed but as a matter of deep wisdom and eternal counsel, and upon a plan comprehending all circumstances, and ensuring adequate and corresponding results. This is what is strictly called by divines the covenant of grace; the eternal covenant of the Holy Trinity one with another, springing from the infinite benevolence of the united Godhead, and giving birth to an exhibition of mercy towards man of which nothing on his part is a condition, but the whole is most spontaneous and sovereign. The tenor of this covenant was, of course, to establish the probation of all mankind, and to secure the salvation of many; both of which objects are worthy of the blessed God, and will be fully and gloriously accomplished.

The origination of redemption belongs to the Father; including the contrivance, sanction, and acceptance of a judicial satisfaction, the institution and acceptance of a system of mediation between himself and sinners, with the election and transfer to his Son of a people to be ransomed. The accomplishment of redemption was assigned to the Son; that is to say, the offering of sacrifice in atonement for sin, the appearance as an intercessor in the presence of the Father, and the conduct of those who were given him to glory. The application of redemption engages the agency of the Spirit: namely, in connection with the system of universal probation, the communication of adequate portions of divine knowledge, the exhibition of satisfactory evidences of its truth, and the institution of suitable means for its efficacy; and, in connection with individual salvation, the renewal of the heart and enlightening of the eyes, with subsequent direction, consolation, sanctification, and preservation. Sending his Son on this great work, the Father is represented as investing him with such offices and powers as its fulfilment required; all which may be comprised in the familiar classification of prophet, priest, and king, all prefigured by the emblems of the Jewish economy. To qualify him for the discharge of them, the Father is also declared to have anointed him, namely, by pouring out the Spirit upon him without measure. To the prophetical character belongs the office of instruction; to the priestly, those of atonement and

intercession; to the kingly, that of government. For this latter purpose he is made head over all things; extending his dominion over both righteous and wicked men, and over angels holy or fallen, in order to subdue his foes, and to protect, while he rules, his people.

"He must reign till he hath put all things under his feet; then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." It is clear that this must be understood of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, which is strictly a trust, and of which an account and a resignation are necessary parts. In its nature and design, also, it is manifestly temporary, instituted in contemplation of human misery and guilt, and designed to restore the victim from his ruin; it appropriately, therefore, if not necessarily, ceases when this is effected. There is, besides, in the very existence of a mediatorial system, something that speaks of an imperfect restoration to the friendship of God; otherwise, why may we not have a direct intercourse with him? While sin or any one of its consequences remains, mediation is necessary and delightful; but, when this is the case no longer, then is its relinquishment more blessed. We are told accordingly, that, in the end, "God shall be all in all." The influence of sin shall be felt no more; nor shall its remembrance serve any other purpose than to awaken our hearts to the glories of the love which has redeemed us from its power.

CHAPTER XI.

General Aspect of the Character of God in his Ways towards Man.

HAVING completed our brief survey of the ways of God to man, it may be proper, before we conclude, to take a general view of the aspect in which the divine character is thus presented. It is inevitable that the character of God should be exhibited in his ways, which are but so many exercises of his attributes, or discoveries of himself; and we are led to believe that the manifestation of his character, and his glory therein,

is, in a remote sense, the chief end of his operations. Now the glory of God, as thus arising from his works, depends upon the observation of them by intelligent beings. It is for us, therefore, to turn aside, and see this great sight.

It is necessary, indeed, to stand aloof from measuring the ways of God by mortal lines, and from asserting that what appears mysterious to us cannot be honourable to him; yet we may expect to find that, to the eye of friendship, what he has done will appear, on the whole, worthy of the highest ideas we have formed of his character.

The aspect of the primary condition of man, anterior to the probation in Eden, is unquestionably that of benevolence, as a state of personal friendship between man and his Maker. If it pleased God to institute also a method of moral government, it is manifestly in the strictest equity; while the system itself is expressive of the brightest wisdom, and conducive to the most beneficent ends. The rational and voluntary obedience for which scope is thus afforded, is among the highest honours that can be rendered to God, and the greatest felicities that can be enjoyed by creatures. Benevolence is the characteristic of the probation in Eden also, since it directly contemplated an increase of happiness to man. If the acquisition was associated with a test of his fidelity, the method approves itself to our soundest feelings of what is reasonable and wise; while the appointment which suspended an accession of bliss on so slight a trial, still maintains a character of eminent kindness. The aspect of the new dispensation, again, most prominently exhibits the same feature, benevolence, but in more conspicuous exercise. Hitherto it had been directed towards the innocent, now to the criminal and the justly condemned. The universal release from the curse of Eden, the opportunity of deliverance from that of God's moral government, the immense sacrifice in which the basis of this system was laid, and the condescending grace by which it is administered, conspire to exalt redeeming love, which thus triumphs over obstacles apparently insurmountable, and "rejoices against judgment." It is true, indeed, that this dispensation is of the nature of moral trial; but, as such a method is most wise and excellent in itself, so, in its present features, it is not only equitable, but unspeakably kind. It is a trial to which man is fully competent by his natural powers, and in which he is addressed by motives of

all but overwhelming force. The aspect of the special interposition of divine mercy is still more pre-eminently that of benevolence, since it is directed to the most criminal feature of human character, namely, the wilful rejection of the Gospel, and contemplates the most blessed results. It is regulated, indeed, by the exercise of sovereign discrimination, but without any violation of equity, or defect of wisdom; affording cause for none to complain, although for some to be more thankful, and exhibiting grace in its amplest triumphs, both as to the results it achieves for man, and the glory it brings to God. The lesson which we learn from his ways, therefore, no less than from his word, is that God is LOVE; holy, just, and sovereign love.

If the whole mass of his operations should appear like the work of a being who, having intended something better, had been frustrated, and had availed himself of after-thought to devise a remedy, which, after all, to his dishonour, is of partial efficacy, such a view would be altogether incorrect. Not that we shall attempt to show how God, who could have prevented evil, was wise or kind in not preventing it; such knowledge is too high, both for us and for our readers. But it is still unquestionable, that, as evil itself originated in creatures whom it was worthy of God to make such as they were, so the existence of it was permitted for ends quite worthy of his dominion. It has been no disappointment, no surprise; and all which appears, perhaps, as an after-thought because it operates as an after-remedy, is in reality the development of his eternal purpose, and the introduction of arrangements before prepared. Nor shall the present mystery remain for ever. Dark as is the cloud which sin has generated, God, our sun, has lost none of his glory; and, although his influence may be obstructed by the storm during its continuance, when it clears away he shall burst upon us with a brighter and more joyful beam.

CONCLUSION.

In what this article has permitted us to present to our readers, we have thought it better to exhibit concisely our own views, than to set before them, in a way of either adverse or favourable argument, the different theories which have divided the religious world. It was not to be expected that any system would engage the concurrence of them all; and, as we have done our best to minister to their guidance, we commend our labours to their candid and serious regard. We have not adopted the system of any man, but have endeavoured to think out one for ourselves; and we must confess, that in the labours of others we have generally found something to approve, and something to reject. We cannot close the present paper without a few remarks on the connexion of our views with the grand controversy which has agitated the Christian world; that, we mean, between Calvinists and Arminians, the various classes of whom, high or low, comprehend the whole number of evangelical divines.

It must be obvious to a discerning reader that we are not high Calvinists. We own no sympathy with the notion that the church existed in Christ from all eternity, was elected in that state of original purity, was deposited in Adam, and fell in him, retaining, through all the iniquities of the individuals who compose it, the complacency of eternal love; nor with the idea that the whole work of redemption is founded upon the exercise of electing grace. We hold, on the contrary, that the primary aspect of God's ways to man is that of moral government; that redemption contemplates a world ruined by rebellion; that it exhibits mercy of universal adaptation and welcome; and that the grand aspect of the dispensation is that of moral probation, to which the election of grace is superadded. But neither are we in any sense Arminians; seeing we maintain the imputation, although not the transfer, of Adam's sin; the total depravity of human nature; the

vicarious character of the death of Christ; election to eternal life; with effectual and persevering grace—sentiments which Arminianism altogether disowns.

Are we then Calvinists at all? Our answer to this question is, that we are unconcerned whether we are called so or not. Taking the representations which have been given by some whom we should call false Calvinists, and by others who are the avowed enemies of that system, we assuredly are not so; we renounce the sentiments, and if we were sure that it was properly applied to them, we would reject the name. But it is impossible to say with what propriety a designation may be applied, until we know what meaning it conveys. In either calling ourselves Calvinists, or allowing ourselves to be called so, we should by no means intend to avow our belief of all that Calvin has asserted, or of all that his professed followers have maintained. The term Calvinism is now used to represent a system of opinions, which admits of various modifications, but which every man may be said to hold who maintains its essential parts, however much he may differ, in other respects, from his precursors and companions in the same school, or even from its founder himself. The essential principles of this system have been considered as reducible to the "five points" which we have mentioned above, and which are largely treated by Dr. Whitby; and upon this ground we must be Calvinists still, for upon all these points we take the Calvinistic side. But, if this does not constitute Calvinism properly so called, it presents at least a definite line of theological sentiment, which ought to have some name, and for which one might reasonably desire a distinctive appellation. Hitherto it has been called only moderate Calvinism: an epithet to which we have no objection, though we fear it will prove an imperfect barrier against the virulence with which this hated word, and all that can be identified with it, has been assailed.

We are fully convinced that the term is in general most ignorantly applied. Besides which, the principle upon which the system has been estimated is a most injurious and fallacious one. Take only its peculiarities, says the examiner; reject every thing which is common to it with other systems, for that is not Calvinism. It has thus become usual to dwell upon the grand truths of the moral government of God, and the probation of man, as distinguishing features of Armin-

ianism: an error into which so respectable a writer as Mr. Faber has fallen, in his discourse on the Predestinarian Controversy.* "In the dispute between Calvinists and Arminians," says this acute writer, "no doctrines ought to be termed Calvinistic but such as belong *exclusively* to Calvinism:" and he proceeds accordingly to discuss the two systems, as though Calvinism contained no sentiments but those of God's sovereignty and man's impotence, and Arminianism none but man's responsibility and divine equity. Mr. Faber's design of avoiding by this means "much useless altercation" was unquestionably good, and we cannot doubt for a moment that he felt himself justified in the course he has pursued; yet we think it must be obvious to him, on reflection, that it has rendered his entire argument nugatory.

Every system is a whole, and as a whole it ought to be tried, if it is tried as a system. The sentiments thus embodied derive much of their intended aspect and bearing from the relations they sustain among themselves, and can no more be accurately viewed without reference to their connexions, than the limbs of an animal can, or the branches of a tree. The abstraction or disregard of any constituent idea destroys the completeness, and with it the symmetry, if not the stability, of the system. Such a method is like proceeding to the examination of an edifice by a preliminary mutilation, and then censuring, as the fault of the architect, the ruin we ourselves have made. Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism, nor any other system, can receive justice on such a principle. Suppose it were adopted with reference to ordinary objects. Imagine, for example, that we wish for an estimate of a man and a brute, or of a beast and a bird; and that we lay down Mr. Faber's rule, to take into consideration nothing that is common to both, but only what is peculiar to each. It is plain that our results would be not only defective, but ridiculous and absurd. Nor is it really otherwise in the case before us. It is not in the least degree surprising that both Calvinism and Arminianism should thus be found to be false; the same method might conduct to the same conclusion respecting every system in the world.

It is not difficult to correct the error into which Mr.

* Sermons on Various Subjects and Occasions, by George Stanley Faber, B.D. Vol. i., p. 414.

Faber has fallen. Whatever object is brought into judgment, we have to examine, not that which belongs to it exclusively, but that which pertains to it essentially. A correct view cannot be formed if any essential property be overlooked. Whatever is accidental may be considered as also extraneous, and may beneficially be separated; but to omit what is essential is to destroy the very object to be investigated, and to substitute another in its room. Let this rule be observed towards Calvinism, and it will have no reason to shrink from the trial; at least, the Calvinism of this volume, which alone we advocate, will not. It is very different, indeed, from the representation of Mr. Faber; but, upon this point, we need only quote his own acknowledgment that it is not Calvinism, but a fragment of it merely, that he has attempted to pourtray.

Having mentioned this discourse, we shall be excused, perhaps, if we take a little further notice of it; to which, indeed, it is the more entitled, both on account of the deserved reputation of the author, and the high pretensions of the discourse itself. We do Mr. Faber but justice in saying, that he has shown himself both learned and acute, both temperate and impartial; and we give him credit for the best intentions. But we must, also, freely express our conviction that the details of his argument are as unsatisfactory, as its general design is defective. It sets out, for example, with a statement of the alleged fundamental principles of Calvinism which he asserts to be altogether incontrovertible, and sustained by express testimony of Scripture; and yet the very first sentiment he enunciates appears to involve a material error. It is as follows: "God is an absolute sovereign, and has an undoubted right to deal with his creatures in whatever manner seems best to his regal will and pleasure."* We hesitate not to affirm, that, in this unqualified form, the assertion is not true, and that there is not a passage of Holy Writ from which it can be deduced. That God is an absolute, or, as Mr. Faber elsewhere says, an arbitrary sovereign, is a sentiment wholly inaccurate. Perfectly independent as he is of external control, his very sovereignty is subject to the restraining and directing influences of holiness, goodness, and wisdom. And although,

* Sermons, p. 420.

with this limitation, the assertion of God's sovereignty is true respecting a part of his ways, those, namely, comprehended in his natural dominion, it has no truth in relation to his moral government. It is therefore inapplicable to such part of the dispensation of mercy as pertains to his moral administration; that is to say, it is irrelevant to the very proceedings concerning which Mr. Faber proceeds to argue from it. The character of God's moral government is not sovereignty, but equity.

The next position, which completes his view of the Calvinistic system, is equally open to objection. "Every man born into this world, by reason of that original corruption which he derives from his first parents, is in a state of spiritual death, or moral inability."* Every man is undoubtedly in a state of spiritual death; but those who have attentively perused the preceding pages will understand us, and we hope they will accompany us, when we affirm, that no such change has taken place in our moral powers as induces inability, or destroys free and responsible agency.

It may be thought singular that an acute and learned writer should have exhibited as the fundamentals of a system, what any persons professing to adopt it entirely reject; but it is not wholly unaccountable. Some Calvinists, perhaps Calvin himself and his immediate followers, have maintained these opinions. Yet a controversialist should have known, if not that there are, at least that there might be, Calvinists who do not hold them, and, therefore, that they are not necessary parts of the system.

These two positions, however, in Mr. Faber's opinion, are "doubtless incontrovertible;" and he proceeds to draw conclusions from them, with an appearance of logical precision and close argumentation which is very imposing. But it is more imposing than substantial. We are far from feeling the force of his reasoning, when, from the fact that the moving cause of election is not in man, he argues that "all who were chosen must have been chosen from God's mere will, and from the sole arbitrary exercise of his sovereign pleasure; and that all who were not chosen must have been passed over on exactly the same ground:"† since it is certain that the character of every man presents a just and sufficient

* Sermons, p. 420. † *Ibid*, p. 425.

ground of abandonment, and at least possible that, although no adequate cause for the exercise of grace exists in mankind, some wise and excellent motives to it may have been found elsewhere. And we differ altogether from the statements, that the unholiness of man is the consequence, and future misery the determinate end, of divine operations.* Our readers need not here be informed what sentiments we entertain upon these points; but, as we have expressed our opinion that the premises are false from which the conclusions are derived, it is needless to notice them in detail. If the foundation be destroyed, the superstructure necessarily falls.

Less injustice is done by Mr. Faber to the Arminian system, inasmuch as he has avoided any attempt to express its fundamental principle, otherwise than by quoting passages of Scripture, to which, of course, no objection can be made. But his argument soon fails. "If all men are able to repent," says he, "then all men are placed upon an exactly equal footing as to the moral possibility of their final salvation; and no such transaction can have taken place as election."† We are not sure that we understand what Mr. Faber here intends by "*moral* possibility," as distinguished from possibility in its general sense. If he means that, from the supposition of all men being able to repent, it follows that all will be equally disposed to do so, the conclusion is not valid; since, though all were able, some may clearly be more inclined to repentance than others. As to the possibility of salvation which lies in the possession of means and opportunities (on which, by a subsequent part of the argument,‡ Mr. Faber seems to have his eye), it is manifest that the question of ability either has no relation to it, or one at all events so partial as to authorize no conclusion. That which truly follows from the premises is, that all men are upon an equitable footing in reference to futurity as far as their powers are concerned; which is the fact, and which Calvinism maintains. Here also is the scope for the only exercise of election for which we contend, namely, the distribution of such helps towards salvation as exceed the measure of universal justice. Mr. Faber represents an "exact equality" in this respect as "an apparently clear point of absolute equity;" but to us this is by no means

* Sermons, p. 426. † *Ibid*, p. 429. ‡ *Ibid*, p. 468.

evident. Equity and equality are far from synonymous terms. We cannot but conceive it possible that persons treated with unimpeachable equity may receive unequal favours.

After concluding the processes by which, according to our author, both Calvinism and Arminianism may be incontrovertibly established, and which certainly Mr. Faber must have found much more convincing than ourselves, he endeavours to prove that, while both are indisputably right, both are demonstrably wrong, inasmuch as both may be pushed to inadmissible consequences. We are cordially willing to abide by the application of this test. With respect to the consequences he has deduced, we may content ourselves with saying, that, as we have objected to the premises, we cannot be involved in the conclusions; but we are prepared to add, that, even upon the admission of the premises, the argument is inconclusive. We do not see, for example, how it follows, that, if men are able to repent, "they have no need of any extrinsic assistance;"* since it is at least conceivable, that, although able, they may not be willing, and that they may be, on this account, as truly in need of gracious aid. We are quite as far from agreeing with him, when Mr. Faber argues that, if God, by an act of his almighty power, could remove the tendency to sin, and do not remove it, the sole moving cause of his not doing so being his sovereign will, "it is impossible to avoid the inference that he wills unholiness."† We have yet to ask, whether, notwithstanding the existence of this tendency to sin, men are not placed in such a state of ability and opportunity as renders them justly accountable. We certainly hold that they are; and, if they are, the conclusion which Mr. Faber draws does not follow from the premises.

But we need not say more, in order to show, not merely (as the author himself seems to suspect) that there is "a fallacy somewhere" in this imposing discourse, but that there are many, and these very manifest and essential. Upon a review, Mr. Faber can scarcely overlook them; and we are sure he will concur with us in regretting, that so defective a process of argumentation should have become the basis of such extensive and important conclusions respecting the

* Sermons, p. 442. † *Ibid*, p. 426.

character of the Sacred Oracles, and the use of our rational powers, as he has allowed to rest upon it. He has been induced to admit, that principles "clearly sustained by Holy Scripture, and doubtless incontrovertible," may be pushed by a process of just reasoning, or by one so far appearing to be just that the "wit of man" has no chance of discovering its fallacy, to false and contradictory conclusions. The idea is both melancholy and confounding. Why, then, are we endowed with rational powers, if their just and diligent use will inevitably conduct us to contradiction and falsehood? Or what can be thought of a communication from our Maker, well acquainted as he must be with the nature and extent of our faculties, if these are the infallible results of its wisest investigation? How can it then be criminal to err? Or how can the blame of spiritual ignorance be thrown on a dishonest heart? And why has so fearful and incredible an aspersion been cast on the inspired volume, and its glorious author? It is afflictive to say, merely because an individual inquirer has missed his way, and bewildered himself in the mazes of controversy. Rather, should we say, though ourselves were the first victims of the sentiment, "Let God be true, although every man be a liar."

But we have neither desire nor occasion to be severe. We have not to deal with an enemy to divine truth, but with a warm and decided friend. We are persuaded that its author will reflect upon the tendency of this discourse with more pain than ourselves; and that, far from being displeased with the plainness of our remarks, he will only wish that he could more effectually recall the sentiments to which his public sanction has been so unhappily given.

Mr. Faber is unquestionably right, when he states his opinion that "the truth lies somewhere between the two rival systems" which he has exhibited; whether "it exceeds the wit of man to point out the exact place where it does lie," he will, upon consideration, allow himself scarcely qualified to decide. We hope, and believe that some nearer approach may be made to it than it has been his lot to effect. His own failure has not unnaturally induced him to decry the attempt; but the object is still too interesting and important to be abandoned. Nor do we think that there is any occasion for despair. Instead of confining our examination to what, in each system, is peculiar and exclusive, let us begin with

what is common and undisputed; we shall then, in all probability, succeed better. Now the moral government of God, and the probation of man, are the common ground on which both the systems stand, and these must be allowed a prominent place in a correct estimate of either. The equity, wisdom, and goodness of this being established in both, it remains only to be ascertained whether it issues in self-sprung conversion to God, according to the Arminian, or, according to the Calvinist, in being made willing in the day of divine power; in the triumph of free-will, or the glory of sovereign grace.

We may add another observation of some importance. Arminianism and Calvinism are not the extremes of theological theory. What is commonly called high Calvinism, though taking the Calvinistic side of the "five points," is quite as distant from moderate Calvinism as this is from Arminianism. It is in fact another system, differing almost *toto cælo*. We have therefore called it false Calvinism, as assuming a name to which it is not entitled; and this is properly the opposite of Arminianism, having as little in common with it as is possible for almost any evangelical system. It is not difficult to see that they do in fact occupy the extreme points. False Calvinism adopts the natural dominion of God to the neglect of his moral government, and thus contends for his sovereignty to the exclusion of his equity; Arminianism adopts the moral government of God to the neglect of his natural dominion, and accordingly contends for his equity to the exclusion of his sovereignty. In this respect true or moderate Calvinism has manifestly the advantage. It is the safe path between the extremes. It brings into full and satisfactory operation all the principles of moral government, and at the same time exhibits unfettered the illustrious exercise of sovereign and discriminating grace. The separation of these two aspects of God's conduct has been the inveterate tendency, the great misfortune, and the greater fault, of polemical divines; the combination of them is the grand desideratum in this most interesting study. This has been our aim, in which we trust our readers will concur with us. Let there be no more a system chosen which leaves one half of the Bible to its adversaries for its destruction, while the other is employed in fruitless triumph and ineffectual defence. To take the whole Scripture is both our glory and our strength.

This also will tend to reconcile all parties, and to unite all hearts. That which gives a doctrinal party its strength is the fact of its possessing a portion of truth; and the idea of being almost exclusively engaged in the support of this truth, is that which inspires its energy. By unreasonably magnifying this fragment of the faith, or perhaps by regarding it as the whole, each is tempted to think itself the sole defender, if not the sole possessor, of truth, and to consider all others as enemies to the Gospel, and despoilers of its glory. But let it only be ascertained by the extreme parties on either hand, that the one admits all that can be scripturally maintained concerning the sovereignty of God, and the other all that can be justly contended for respecting the equity of his government, and they will surely become much better friends. And we ask whether this may not be realized on the ground we have taken. What more can be maintained, either of divine equity on the one hand, or of divine sovereignty on the other? As one is our master, even Christ, so the truth he teaches is but one; and one may the hearts be which are formed under its influence, for the fellowship of time and the union of eternity!

APPENDIX.

A REJOINDER TO MR. HALDANE.

INTRODUCTION.

Mr. James Haldane, of Edinburgh, has published a book with the following title:—*Man's Responsibility; the Nature and Extent of the Atonement; and the Work of the Holy Spirit; in reply to Mr. Howard Hinton and the Baptist Midland Association.* The share which I have in this publication will best appear by giving the author's statement, that, after having written most of his remarks on my sentiments, a Circular Letter of the Midland Association (issued several years ago) came into his hands, and that he thought proper to review it in the same volume. His book is accordingly divided into two parts: the first, headed *Man's Responsibility*, relates to me; and the second, headed *Atonement of Christ and the Work of the Spirit*, refers to the Association Letter. It is with the former, of course, that I have exclusively to do.

I am happy that, after the "many years" during which, according to Mr. Haldane, I have "been attempting to introduce a system of doctrine very opposite to that contained in the Word of God" (p. 5), and during which, I may add, no writer has deemed my efforts worthy of a serious attempt at refutation, this gentleman has done me and the religious public the kindness of animadverting upon my sentiments. A kindness I call it, and, for myself, I sincerely deem it such. For, in the commencement, I wrote not more to teach than to learn; and I have all along cherished an earnest desire, that some divine of more mature age and more considerable standing than myself, would take the trouble of giving to my entire argument a sifting, by which the chaff might be effectually separated from the wheat.

At length my wish is in part gratified. My corrector is advanced in years and eminent in station; and, personally, I could scarcely have desired any thing more complimentary, than to have brought into the field of controversy so practised a polemic and so ripe a divine as Mr. James Haldane. I have only to regret that the other part of my desire has not been as signally accomplished, namely, that my entire argument should be examined. Mr. Haldane says, indeed (p. 75), that he has "taken a general view of the system" I have "endeavoured to establish, and of the arguments by which it is supported." In fact, however, he has confined his strictures to my treatise on Man's Responsibility; for, although he makes occasional references to the volume on the Work of the Spirit, he does not in a single instance touch the argument of it, and he takes absolutely no notice of any of my other works. But Mr. Haldane's statement is not accurate, even with respect to the single treatise on Responsibility. Much more correctly does he describe his performance by anticipation, when he says (p. 10), "It is by no means our intention to follow Mr. Hinton through all his speculations. . . . But, in the course of his reasoning, he has given an erroneous view of various passages of the Word of God, to which we shall advert, and [we] shall likewise endeavour to prove that his system does not give a just representation of the state of fallen man, and of the way of recovery," p. 10. This, with a protest against the use of what he calls metaphysical reasoning, is just what Mr. Haldane has done. Throughout his observations he overlooks altogether the true scope of my argument, and notices but a small number of its separate parts; while on the whole he attempts nothing more than a skirmish, where, if the occasion were worthy of conflict, there should have been a battle.

To this complaint I must add another. Professing to take "a general view of my system," Mr. Haldane has not taken the trouble to peruse what I have written. He has evidently read nothing but the treatise on Responsibility. His casual references to my volume on the Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion are just sufficient to show that he has not read it. A small volume (the first I published) entitled *Theology, or an Attempt towards a Consistent View of the whole Counsel of God*, and a larger work entitled *The Harmony of Religious Truth and Human Reason*, are not named in his strictures,

and I conclude that they have not come under his eye. In themselves I do not pretend that they possess any merit entitling them to such an honour; but, when he undertook to publish animadversions on my sentiments, it became him, I think, to take effectual means for ascertaining what they were. There were booksellers in Edinburgh who could have readily answered all his inquiries on this subject; and there was at least one, perfectly well known in that city, from whose shelves (I believe) he might at any time have taken either of the volumes I have named.

The ill effects of Mr. Haldane's negligence are traceable throughout his observations. In consequence of it he sometimes imputes to me sentiments the reverse of what I hold. Thus, in page 81, he says, "It appears from our author's work upon the Holy Spirit, that he considers the death with which Adam was threatened in the event of disobedience (Gen. ii. 17) to have been [only] the separation of soul and body." Now, as he makes no reference to the passage in my work on the Spirit on which he founds this statement, I can say nothing about it; but in *Theology*, p. 87, there is an explicit declaration of my sentiments to an exactly contrary effect. Hence, also, without knowing what my views of the atonement are, he assumes that they are the same as those expressed in that Letter of the Midland Association which he has thought proper to criticise, and he holds me responsible substantially for all that is contained in it. I think this is too bad. What the views advocated in that letter may be I am not in the least degree concerned to inquire. If Mr. Haldane had wished to become acquainted with mine, he would have found them fully exhibited in Theology, p. 150, or the Harmony of Religious Truth and Human Reason, p. 266; and any remarks he might have made upon them would have been most gratefully and attentively considered.

While carefulness to know my sentiments before he animadverted upon them would have been a useful act of justice to me, it would have had some not inconsiderable advantages for Mr. Haldane himself. It would have enabled him to secure the gratification of his professed "wish not to misrepresent" me, to spare himself the trouble of guessing whether I hold certain doctrines or not, and to excuse himself altogether from the somewhat equivocal "happiness" of finding himself mistaken, p. 177.

I must notice one more topic of complaint. Mr. Haldane's remarks are characterized by an habitual assumption of his own correctness, and a frequent imputation of wrong motive to his antagonist. In the very first sentence he affirms my views to be "very opposite to those contained in the Word of God." Afterwards he says that I attempt to explain Scripture "in consistency with my system," p. 24; and that I "deem it expedient" to explain texts in a particular manner, p. 28. These are examples of his style throughout. Now I must beg leave to say, that whether my views are or are not in agreement with the Word of God is the matter under discussion, and that this is not to be settled by the opinion of Mr. Haldane. His assertion is, personally, an unwarrantable assumption, and, logically, nothing short of begging the question. As to the imputation that I am a dishonest interpreter of Scripture, Mr. Haldane will inevitably suffer too much by it in the estimation of every intelligent reader, to allow me even to wish for any aggravation of his punishment.

It is extremely difficult to ascertain the scope of Mr. Haldane's strictures. He speaks of "Mr. Hinton's system" as something which he disapproves; yet he nowhere brings it distinctly or intelligibly forward. That which I have attempted in the treatise on Responsibility (which is the only work he professes to answer) is to show that certain elements, which I assume to be proper to a state of responsibility, are actually existent in the nature and condition of man. The elements assumed are five; that action should be independent, intelligent, and free, the agent being in possession of competency, and in view of sufficient motives. Of this hypothetical basis of my argument he says not a single syllable; nor has he permitted any one even to conjecture, whether he admits or denies the fitness of these assumed constituents of a responsible state.

In that treatise I have subsequently taken up these assumed elements singly, and have affirmed the actual existence of all; but Mr. Haldane does not follow me here, either in my own or in any other order. His whole book is an irregular attack on detached passages, and is not adapted to lead to a general conclusion of any kind. Nothing remains for me, therefore, but to notice his animadversions as I find them, making some attempt at arrangement as I proceed.

Mr. Haldane attacks what he is pleased to call my system

in two ways—in principle, and in detail. It will be better to meet him in the former direction first; since, if I should be unsuccessful here, the defence of the details will be superseded.

CHAPTER I.

On the State Induced by the Fall.

My fundamental error Mr. Haldane conceives to relate to the condition into which mankind were brought by the fall. My view is, that, notwithstanding the fall, mankind are in a state of benignant probation; that they have a law to obey, and a Gospel to accept if they break the law. Mr. Haldane thinks differently. He says "that, in virtue of the relation in which we stand to our first father, his guilt is our guilt, and we are all most justly condemned in him. . . All sinned and died in Adam," he proceeds; "hence all are dead in trespasses and sins. By the riches of God's grace many are plucked as brands from the burning, while others are left to perish. All are by nature accursed—'the children of wrath,'" p. 77.

Now I freely admit, that, if these things be so, the entire system which I have advocated must fall. In this case, the law presents to mankind no rule, and the Gospel no remedy: and whether men can or cannot obey the one or receive the other, or whether sufficient motives are presented to them for either—the principal questions I have agitated—are thenceforth questions without value. If Mr. Haldane can establish this, there does not remain a single point for which I care to contend.

I beg it may be observed, however, by what process my position would in this event be overthrown. It would be by maintaining that the whole human race (since the fall) are born under a divine curse; and that, abstracting the elect, there is for mankind neither rule of life nor provision of mercy, nor any possible adaptation to their benefit in the evangelical system or ministry. Those who, with Mr. Haldane, believe these things to be "written as with a sunbeam in the Word of God," may share in his triumph, if he has

gained one; but he can have accomplished nothing for any besides. There are many who do not agree with me on the ability of man for the discharge of his duty, who nevertheless cannot concur in this matter with Mr. Haldane; and they have still the whole argument to encounter.

In truth, to attack my sentiments respecting human ability in this manner, is to leave my argument untouched. The ideas that mankind are in a state of probation, and that the commands of the law and the promises of the Gospel relate to all, are necessarily assumed by it. Without these being supposed, the point cannot arise which I have proposed to discuss. If there be no law to be obeyed and no Gospel to be believed, the question whether men can or cannot believe and obey cannot, without absurdity, be propounded; the attempt to reason on it implies, or ought to imply, the admission of its basis. On this ground it may be affirmed, I think, that Mr. Haldane is not the man by whom this matter should have been taken up. There is not enough in common betwixt him and me, to create a possibility of our holding a satisfactory argument. He denies what my argument assumes, and draws me to a field of debate entirely new. I have not to discuss with him whether men can obey a rule which has been given, or believe a message which has been sent to them; but whether the rule has been given, and the message sent. I submit that this is not the way to bring my views on that point to the test. What is wanting in order to this is, that some one should enter the lists who agrees in the premises laid down. Give me an antagonist who admits (as multitudes do) that God has given a law and a Gospel to all, and let him argue with me concerning man's ability to obey the one, and to believe the other.

It is time, however, to inquire what force my present opponent has brought in support of the position he has taken; since, if he has made it good, I shall have, according to my acknowledgment already made, to confess myself overcome.

My views of the relation of Adam's posterity to him as their head, and of the effects of his transgression, are so fully stated in the work to which this rejoinder is appended, that I should be inexcusable to trouble the reader with a repetition of them here. It will be enough for me to say, that I hold as firmly as Mr. Haldane that Adam stood in a federal rela-

tion to his posterity, by virtue of which they were to partake of the results of his conduct in the trial appointed and accomplished in Eden. I hold further, that this arrangement implied as its basis the imputation of Adam's conduct (whether good or bad) to his posterity; such imputation being the only proper ground for extending the consequences of his conduct to them. Mr. Haldane, it will be perceived, goes beyond this. He tells us that "all men sinned in Adam," and are "condemned in him," p. 78. To both these ideas I object.

1. I notice in the first instance the representation that "all men sinned in Adam." Mr. Haldane evidently insists on taking this language in its literal and unqualified import. "His guilt," he affirms, "is our guilt," p. 77.

In the use of the term guilt in this connexion, some embarrassment arises from its equivocal and uncertain meaning. It may mean either a liability to punishment, or a desert of punishment. A person may be guilty in law (as by an erroneous verdict of a jury) who is not guilty in fact; or, as in attainder of treason, children may be involved in the legal sentence pronounced on their father, although they had no share in his crime. Now, if by guilt be intended only liability to punishment, I hold with Mr. Haldane that we partake of our first parent's guilt; but if, as appears probable (not to say evident), he means by guilt criminality, or desert of punishment, in this sense I do not hold it. Nor is it, in my judgment, a scriptural tenet. Mr. Haldane adduces in proof that all men sinned in Adam the words of the apostle, "By one man's disobedience many were made SINNERS" (Rom. v. 19), laying by his capitals great emphasis on the last word. But why has he not met the oft-repeated observation, that to *treat a person as a sinner* is a just interpretation of the phrase to *make him a sinner?* In this manner men are said to make God a liar, and in this manner the human race may have been made sinners by Adam's sin; that is, in consequence of it they may be treated as sinners. Will not this satisfy the apostle's language?

The comment of Mr. Haldane on the latter part of Rom. v. 19—"Even so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"—is in the following words:—"Such is the unity between Christ and his people, in consequence of his having taken part in flesh and blood with the children whom God had given him, that their sin is truly his sin, and his

righteousness is truly theirs," p. 78. It would, of course, be in no degree convincing to the writer of this extraordinary sentence to express amazement at it, or to call it (what nevertheless I deem it) a caricature of the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ; but will he permit me to suggest the inquiry, whether he has ever asked himself the meaning of his own terms? The sin of believers (he says) is *truly* the sin of Christ. The force of this emphasis is to exclude the idea of imputation as a legal act, resorted to for judicial purposes, and to insist on that of an actual transfer of conduct and character. This notion is utterly unsupported by Holy Writ, and it seems to be both impossible and absurd. Character and actions are essentially personal, and cannot be transferred. To say that my actions are another's and another's mine, is to say what is false and preposterous. In the case before us it is more than preposterous, it approaches to blasphemy. The sin of believers, we are told, is *truly* the sin of Christ; that is to say, the criminality belonging to them attaches to the Redeemer!

Why should we entertain an exaggerated view of a glorious doctrine of the Gospel? Undoubtedly, "by the obedience of one many are made righteous;" that is to say, they are treated as righteous in consequence of the righteousness wrought out by Christ their surety, whose righteousness is imputed to believers for their justification, just as Adam's sin was, for a different purpose, imputed to his posterity. Are not the demands of just scriptural interpretation met by this statement? In this sense it may be truly said that the righteousness of Christ is ours; that is to say, ours by imputation, and for purposes of judicial benefit. But, when Mr. Haldane insists upon more than this, and will have it that the righteousness of Christ is *truly* ours, and our sin *truly* his, he uses language from which it might be concluded that believers are justified by their own righteousness, and that Christ was, or ought to have been, condemned for his own sin.

Further to show that all sinned in Adam, Mr. Haldane adduces the customary argument from the death of infants. "We see death reigning," says he, "over infants, who have not sinned after the manner of Adam's transgression. Now death is the wages of sin; and, if infants were not sinners, they would not be subject to death. 'Who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?' Job iv. 7." P. 77.

This quotation from the book of Job, which is too fair a sample of Mr. Haldane's general habit of scriptural citation, is clearly not to the purpose. In the mouth of Eliphaz it is nothing more than a reference to God's providence, and even in reference to this it is not a truth, but one of many mistakes fallen into by Job's friends in their interpretation of the divine ways. That death is the wages of sin is true; and it is true also, that, if infants were not in some sense sinners, they would not be subject to death. But there is a sense in which infants may be said to be sinners, without affirming them to be literally so. By the imputation to them of Adam's sin they have become sinners in the view of the divine administration, and for the purposes of it; that is to say, they are liable to be treated as sinners, and on this ground they are subjected to death.

2. Connected with Mr. Haldane's idea that all men sinned in Adam is another, which is, in my view, equally objectionable; namely, that all men are "condemned in him," and "by nature accursed." "According to the Scriptures," says he, "fallen man is 'lost,' he is 'condemned already,' and such as are not regenerated, or created anew, must therefore inevitably perish, for 'the wrath of God abideth on them.' All sinned and died in Adam; hence all are 'dead in trespasses and sins.' By the riches of God's grace many are plucked as brands from the burning, while others are left to perish. All are by nature accursed—the 'children of wrath' —and the salvation of the redeemed is the wonder of angels: 1 Pet. i. 12." Pp. 76, 77.

By the scriptural reference at the end of this passage, one would have supposed that it contained a proof of some part at least of the preceding statement. But it is not so. In 1 Pet. i. 12, we find nothing but the familiar words, "Which things the angels desire to look into." Some references more to the point would have been highly satisfactory, in support of a statement which is so positively affirmed to be "according to the Scriptures." As the statement itself, however, is made up in great part of scriptural phrases, it will be proper to examine their import and relevancy.

"According to the Scriptures, fallen man is 'lost.'" Perhaps so, Mr. Haldane; but where do the Scriptures testify that mankind are lost *by the fall?* I ask, however, where they testify that man as such is lost; or any man,

otherwise than by his own (not Adam's) transgression? Do they bear witness that dying infants are lost? Or do they declare that the wrath of God is revealed against any thing but "the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"?

Again:—"According to the Scriptures," Mr. Haldane tells us, "fallen man—is 'condemned already,' 'and the wrath of God abideth on him.'" This is an obvious misapplication of Scripture. The words of our Lord, of which a part is here taken, are as follows:—"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God, and the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. One would scarcely have conceived it possible that a declaration announcing the state of men *through unbelief*, should have been, by any measure of inattention, adduced as evidence of the condition of mankind *through the fall.*

Other phrases which are interlarded in the passage before us—"dead in trespasses and sins," and "by nature children of wrath"—refer us, of course, to Eph. ii. 1, 3, although the text is not named. As to the former of these phrases, a glance at the connexion demonstrates that the condition referred to is exclusively the result of the personal conduct of the parties:—"dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world," &c. The same may be said of the latter phrase, which is thus introduced:—"the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." It is evident that the apostle is here describing the previous habits of the Ephesian converts, and the wrath to which they had become obnoxious by them. The phrase "by nature," accustomed as we are to place it in strict antithesis with its usual counterpart—by practice—does not convey the sense of the place. Φύσει, the original term, may properly be understood as denoting such habits and practices as arise out of, and are congenial with, our natural impulses and passions.

Mr. Haldane seems inclined to infer the condemnation of mankind in Adam from their depravity. "Fallen man," says he, "is not only depraved but condemned, and the former is the effect of the latter. By the curse he is cut off from God, the fountain of all purity and holiness.

Hence that depravity which our author acknowledges, while he appears to overlook its source," p. 76. But where is Mr. Haldane's authenticating reference for this statement? We have not in this case even the usual interlarding of scriptural phraseology, so remote is the entire Bible from this representation. That all the children of Adam bring into the world with them a bias to evil, I admit. I admit also, that this is one of the results of Adam's transgression under the federal system which God saw fit to adopt, and that the universal diffusion of it establishes the comprehension of the whole race within that system. I do not conclude, however, that mankind are under the curse of the Eden covenant, because they were comprehended within the terms of it, and experience some of the consequences of its transgression. I conceive that, by the immediate superinduction of the dispensation of mercy, the curse of that covenant was wholly cancelled; and that such effects of the transgression as were permitted to remain, were neither for the purpose, nor of the nature, of punishment, but appropriate elements of a new condition of equitable and benignant trial. For a fuller development of this view than would be proper here, I beg to refer the reader to Theology, part II., chap. 2.

3. Of the many objections to his theory of human perdition, Mr. Haldane notices but one. "It may be asked," he says, "if mankind were condemned in Adam, why were they placed under law?" P. 80. Of course he means here the moral law, which requires supreme love to our Maker and equal love to our neighbour, and sanctions its requirements by penalties and rewards; see Romans ii. 6–10. No doubt, the question is very much to the point. If men are already condemned, why are they placed under such a system? Let us hear Mr. Haldane's answer to this inquiry.

"The law," says he, "was given in reference to the coming of the Saviour;" and he supports this by adding, "hence he is said to be 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'" This quotation is irrelevant. It is not intended by the apostle to exhibit the scope and design of the moral law, but simply to set forth the fact that Christ has fulfilled the law for the justification of every believer. "The law," Mr. Haldane goes on to say, "makes no allowance for human frailty; it demands perfect obedience, and pronounces a curse on every deviation, thus exhibiting God's

abhorrence of sin, and the absolute necessity of a perfect righteousness in order to our acceptance with God." Upon Mr. Haldane's principles this work of the law must be altogether a work of supererogation, since, according to him, mankind are not condemned for breaking the law, but for having "sinned in Adam." Upon no ground, however, can this be taken as a just description of the design of the law; since it plainly announces rewards as well as penalties, and is exhibited by the apostle (Rom. ii. 7) as pointing out the way to "glory, honour, and immortality." "The law," he further tells us, "'was added,' not that by it sinners might be justified, but 'that the offence might abound,' and 'that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.'" He here confounds the moral with the ceremonial law. We are no where told that the moral law "was added" to the divine dispensations. It is the ceremonial law which the apostle tells us (Gal. iii. 19) "was added, because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Undoubtedly, neither the one law nor the other was given "that by it sinners might be justified;" and the ceremonial law was added "that the offence might abound"—that is, that the magnitude of human guilt might be more strikingly exhibited. When, however, Mr. Haldane represents it as the design of the moral law "that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God," he misapplies the words of the apostle. From a consideration of Rom. iii. 9, *seq.*, it is plain that, by the term law, in the 19th verse, he means the Scriptures then written, from which he had been citing various passages to show that the Jews, with all their advantages, were as truly exposed to condemnation as the Gentiles.

The scope of the moral law is distinctly set forth by the apostle, in a passage deserving of more regard than Mr. Haldane seems to have paid to it. God "will render to every man according to his works: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath," Rom. ii. 6, 9. And Mr. Haldane has given no satisfactory answer to the question, why men should have been placed under such a system of probationary reward and punishment, "if they were condemned in Adam." As to

his assertion that the moral law was given in reference to the coming of the Saviour, it is the very opposite of the truth. It is the violation of that law which creates the occasion for the interposition of the Saviour. Mr. Haldane, indeed, says that, "men's ungodliness and worldly lusts in their natural state are *the proof* of their guilt and condemnation," p. 81. The apostle, however, declares that it is "*against* the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" that "wrath from heaven is revealed," and that "*because* of those things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience," Rom. i. 18, Eph. v. 6. The sins of men are, therefore, not the proof, but the substance of their guilt, and not the proof, but the cause of their condemnation.

On the sentiment that mankind are in a state of probation, Mr. Haldane remarks—"In one sense men may be said to be in a state of probation, for now is the seed time and eternity is the harvest; but, strictly speaking, when Adam rebelled, the probation of man came to an end. He was lost and condemned; but a ransom was provided for an innumerable multitude whom God had chosen in Christ before the world began, having predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son, and to become the children of the second Adam—the Lord from heaven—the head of the new creation," p. 82.

I cordially agree with all that is said in the latter part of this passage; but I do not hold that, "when Adam rebelled, the probation of man came to an end." It is no doubt true, that at this point the specific probation instituted in paradise came to an end; but I affirm the existence of a system of probation altogether different, and one which at that point must rather have taken its rise than have found its termination. It appears to me that, under the execution of the covenant of Eden, Adam, as a transgressor of it, could have had no posterity; for he was to die "in the day" he should eat, Gen. ii. 17. The very existence of the human race, therefore, implies the introduction and demonstrates the influence of a new dispensation, resting on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. A state of existence founded on such a basis cannot be in its nature accursed, and characterized by condemnation *ab initio*. It must be a condition expressive of benignity, and instinct with hope. In other words, it is a state of new and benignant probation for all who arrive at

the period of moral agency. How Mr. Haldane's seed-time and harvest can make a state of probation in any sense it is hard to understand, seeing there is, according to him, no possibility of sowing anything but seeds of perdition.

It is further displeasing to Mr. Haldane that I have termed the Gospel "an experiment;" and, to refute me, he enters at large into a statement of divine proceedings respecting the elect. Now I am as well persuaded as himself, that, with respect to God's chosen people, there has been no experiment. Upon this point we are agreed. It is the non-elect only towards whom I conceive the Gospel to have the aspect of an experiment. I am quite aware that Mr. Haldane cannot consistently admit this, while he holds that the plan of salvation wholly excludes that portion of mankind. If, however, he held with me, that, in addition to the purpose of grace which has been formed towards the elect, and will be accomplished in them, the rest of the human race have been placed in a condition of probationary mercy, then he would no doubt admit the existence of an experiment, inasmuch as probation is of necessity an experiment. He can find no fault with me, therefore, for using the term, while I apply it exclusively, as I have always done, to that aspect of the Gospel, which if he admitted it to exist, he himself would call by the same name.

It seems to me, however, that, notwithstanding his frequent denials of it, he admits in express terms the thing itself. What else are we to understand by the following passage? "The Gospel presents the most powerful motives to induce men to flee from the wrath to come, and *opens to all who hear it, without exception, a door of hope*," p. 71. How is "a door of hope" opened to a sinner unless there is a provision made for his salvation? That "all who hear" of this provision do not embrace it is beyond question; and what, to those who reject it, is the proclamation of such a Gospel, but a probation and an experiment?

CHAPTER II.

On the Influence of Reflection.

In noticing the details of my treatise, Mr. Haldane bestows much attention on my statements respecting the influence of reflection over our feelings. I shall devote the present chapter to his remarks on this subject.

I have laid it down that, notwithstanding the fall, truths of every class, "when reflected on," will act on the feelings of men "according to their nature;" since, if it were not so, the fall must have impaired the structure of the mind, which is not to be supposed. Into this, he says naïvely, "I shall not inquire," p. 67. He leaves his readers to conclude, therefore, that the objection, which is clearly relevant, is unanswerable. He goes on to say—"Man is so corrupt and alienated from God, that, when he hears the Gospel, ... 'the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.'" For what end John i. 5 is quoted here I cannot understand. From the pen of the evangelist, the words are descriptive of the ignorance of the Jewish people at the time of Christ's appearance, and of their insensibility to his glory; what they are to the purpose of the present argument perhaps Mr. Haldane will explain hereafter. I am equally at a loss to perceive the bearing of the reference to the fallen angels, which immediately follows. "Whether our author holds that the fall of the angels 'impaired the structure' of their 'mind,' I cannot tell; but, at all events, I hardly suppose he will maintain, that, on every principle of equity, they should be exempted from religious responsibility altogether." What does this mean? Or what is the possible bearing of it on an antagonist who holds that the fall has *not* impaired the structure of the human mind, and, consequently, has not laid a foundation in equity for the exemption of mankind from responsibility?

"Mr. Hinton," says Mr. Haldane, "speaks with great confidence of the importance of reflection on religious truth —a position which we have no wish to controvert, although the connexion between the apprehension of condemnation and turning to God is by no means uniform," p. 67. If it

will be any gratification to him, I will admit that "turning to God" does not in any case result from the "apprehension of condemnation." But did not Mr. Haldane know, that, when I spoke of reflecting on religious truth, I intended much more than contemplating the curse? "Religious truth," surely, comprehends the promises of salvation as well as the denunciations of wrath; and, as he admits that a sinner may be terrified by the one, why should he deny that he may be attracted by the other?

He quotes me thus:—"Religious truth, when reflected on, will operate on the minds of men without any exception." And he answers:—"Undoubtedly: but how will it operate? It never produces conversion, himself being judge," p. 67. This is making, as I think, an unfair use of my declaration that, in my opinion, no one ever did or ever will repent but under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Mr. Haldane employs this concession here only as a pretext for turning aside from the straight course of his argument. He admits that reflection will operate, but he asks "how will it operate;" to which he makes answer that it never *does* produce conversion, for which he alleges my authority. My rejoinder is, that this is no answer to his question. When he asks me to say how reflection on religious truth will operate, I reply, it will produce conversion. This is the proper answer to his inquiry, and an answer which, if he had read my writings, he would have known that I have given again and again.

"Men are not absolutely without feeling in regard to religion," continues Mr. Haldane; "but our author agrees with us that none of them ever did or ever will turn to God except through the Holy Spirit; and consequently, so far as the question is practical, himself hath decided it," p. 63. Here he assigns as a reason why my opinion of the efficacy of reflection, even if it be true, may be superseded, that I have practically nullified it by the concession which he quotes. No doubt I should have laid myself open to an attack much more satisfactory to Mr. Haldane, if I had not made that concession. What, however, results from it? I have negatived my other opinion by it, he says, "as far as it is practical." He speaks as though the doctrine of the efficacy of reflection had no practical bearing, except as securing the salvation of men. It has, however, several practical bearings besides this. It may be enough for me to

mention two. One is, that it reduces the Gospel ministry into harmony with human nature and common sense; and another is, that it creates a strong and intelligible motive for men's looking earnestly after their spiritual concerns. The sentiment need not, therefore, be thrown aside for want of practical value.

Mr. Haldane thinks that by my concession I have involved myself in a "difficulty," from which I attempt "to escape, by distinguishing between sufficient and efficient" motives. I have alleged, he says, "that the motives held out to men to turn to God are sufficient, although they never were and never will be effectual;" and he thus replies—"But the means which God employs *are effectual* for accomplishing his eternal purpose in the salvation of his redeemed people," p. 68. This is true, but not to the point, since my allegation relates to the means which God employs towards others than "his redeemed people." Will Mr. Haldane say that these means, which, of course, are not effectual, are also not sufficient? And will he say this in the teeth of the following language, which I quote from himself? "The Gospel presents the most powerful motives to induce men to flee from the wrath to come, and opens to all who hear it, without exception, a door of hope, however aggravated their guilt. Every bar is removed out of the way of those who possess the Sacred Oracles. They are warned of their danger, and invited to enter the ark. What could have been done more for sinners of mankind who possess the Word of God? Nothing, in the way of external advantages," p. 71.

Mr. Haldane next comments on my statement that, upon the supposition of the inefficacy of reflection, the evangelical ministry is unintelligible and absurd. "The Scriptures exhibit it," I have said, "as adapted to persuade men. Herein God speaks to them, and bids them hearken and incline their ear, as being about to say things which, if they hearken to them, will exert an influence on their minds. But we are now told that, although men should hearken to divine pleadings, they will exert no influence. Where then is the use of demanding their attention, and of complaining so bitterly that it is withheld? It is henceforth nothing more than an artifice and a mockery." To this reasoning Mr. Haldane replies first, that it "gives a very false view of 'the entire system of the evangelical ministry;'" meaning that all but the elect are

in a state of irreversible condemnation, an opinion which I have sufficiently noticed in the preceding chapter. His second reply is in these words:—"By whom has Mr. Hinton been told 'that, although men should hearken to divine pleadings, they will exert no influence'?" And he immediately quotes the words of Scripture (Isaiah lv. 4), "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Now I most readily admit that I did not receive the doctrine of the inefficiency of divine pleadings, when hearkened to, from the prophet Isaiah. I was, indeed, aware beforehand that the spirit of prophecy by his lips directly contradicted it, as Mr. Haldane has kindly pointed out. As to the parties by whom I have been told "that, although men should hearken to divine pleadings, they will exert no influence"—saving influence, of course, is intended,—they are, I am sorry to say, too numerous; and I am more especially sorry to announce that among them is Mr. James Haldane, of Edinburgh, in the publication now before me. Having admitted that reflection on religious truth will operate in a certain manner, he asks how it will operate; and he tells us it "may produce terror, or transient joy. Sometimes," he adds, "it produces infidelity; or leads men to seek for refuge in a church professing infallibility. At other times it produces insanity, and hence we see the people of the world filled with apprehensions, when they see any of their relations begin to reflect much upon religion," pp. 67, 68. It is clear from this extraordinary sentence that Mr. Haldane believes, although he has not expressly stated it, that reflection upon religious truth will not produce conversion. After his unanswerable quotation from the prophet Isaiah, I must leave him to settle this point with the seer as he best may.

After reiterating the assertion that "men will not hearken to the gracious invitations of the Gospel," which I make quite as freely as Mr. Haldane, he quotes the declaration "that men cannot come to Christ except the Father draw them, John vi. 44, 65," p. 71. I am not at all surprised at this citation. On the contrary, I had been looking, as a matter of course, for the old argument founded on the scriptural use of the term cannot, in relation to sinners turning to God. I am surprised, however, that this staple argument has been made so little use of on this occasion. The passage I have quoted is almost the only instance in which Mr.

Haldane makes reference to it; and here he handles it as though he were either ashamed or afraid of it. After simply quoting the passage from John, he says, "Mr. Hinton smiles at this '*cannot-ism.*'" Not exactly so. I have done something more than smile at it, as Mr. Haldane, if he had read my volume on the Work of the Holy Spirit, would have well known. Why has he not attempted to answer those pages, in which I have frankly explained my reasons for believing that cannot in this case means will not, and nothing more?

Commenting on my admission that "men will not hearken, or incline their ear to instruction," he says, "Well, here is an insuperable bar. . . . Their minds cannot be affected unless this disinclination be overcome," p. 72. There is nothing embarrassing here, but the quickness with which Mr. Haldane starts aside from the real question, and darts into a tortuous path. What I have asserted is, that the Gospel will savingly affect men's minds if they will reflect on it, admitting at the same time that they will not reflect. Immediately he exclaims in triumph, "Here is an insuperable bar!" A bar to what? To men's being converted by the Gospel if they reflect on it? Not at all; and the exclamation has, therefore, no bearing on the subject. If men's disinclination to reflect is a bar to any thing, it is to their reflecting, which I admit; but it cannot be held to be an insuperable bar, unless it be supposed that men cannot reflect when they are disinclined to it. As to Mr. Haldane's assertion, that men's minds cannot be savingly affected by the Gospel unless their disinclination to reflect on it be removed, it is beside the point. Men can reflect upon the Gospel notwithstanding their disinclination to it; and, if they do so, it will turn them to God.

"What avails it," he goes on to ask, "that religious truth when reflected on will operate on the minds of men, when it is admitted in the same breath that 'men will not meditate' on religious truth?" Why, he shows immediately that he knows very well what it avails; for he adds, "he [Mr. Hinton] wishes to prove that men are inexcusable when they reject the Gospel." No doubt I do; and what has Mr. Haldane to say to this desired conclusion? He says "*it is freely admitted.*" This must be either a slip of his pen, or a happy inconsistency with himself. Certainly the conclusion cannot fairly be derived from the premises which he himself has

laid down. According to him, there is no interposition of grace but for God's chosen people, and they are effectually called. To the rest of mankind, therefore, no merciful provision can be announced, and by them consequently, none can be rejected. But, even supposing Christ were exhibited as a Saviour to them, if it were true (as he holds) that they cannot come to him, their inaction is far from being without excuse. Such an entanglement in contradictions would be intolerable to some men; but it seems to sit easily on Mr. Haldane.

I cannot close this chapter without bringing out somewhat more prominently, what seems to me to be the radical fallacy of Mr. Haldane's argument. I have said that reflection on divine truth will operate to conversion. Mr. Haldane says that it will operate, but not to conversion. He admits that it will operate very powerfully, for he says it may produce infidelity, popery, or insanity; but, nevertheless, it will not produce conversion. Now I am entitled, I think, to call upon him to show cause for this distinction. It seems to me a most strange imputation on the entire body of evangelical truth, to say that reflection upon it will produce infidelity, popery, and insanity; for, since reflection is nothing more than a method of bringing out the proper influence of things reflected on, it follows from such a view that the Gospel itself is adapted to bring about these results. If I have uttered a fearful sentiment in affirming that reflection on divine truth will lead to conversion, what has Mr. Haldane done, in telling us that it will cause infidelity, popery, and insanity? But this is not all. Since reflection on divine truth will operate so powerfully as to produce infidelity, popery, and insanity, why should it not also produce conversion? Why are its fruits to be restricted to those deplorable consequences? It must be either because it is not in the nature and adaptation of the Gospel to produce any other—which I do not for a moment suppose Mr. Haldane to intend—or because there is something in the mind of man which causes the Gospel to produce effects contrary to its nature and tendency. Does Mr. Haldane believe this? Will he undertake to show what this element is? And will he further undertake to demonstrate the consistency of such an element in the human mind, with the established and irreversible principles of divine government and human action?

CHAPTER III.

On Understanding the Gospel.

Mr. Haldane insists strongly that, without divine teaching, men cannot understand the Gospel; and he impugns my view of several passages which relate to this subject. Before proceeding to an examination of his objections, however, it may be advantageous to notice one of his theological opinions which is mixed up with his remarks on this subject. It is stated at the close of his third chapter, in the following manner:—"According to the Word of God, conversion and the knowledge of the truth are convertible terms," p. 32.

The purpose which Mr. Haldane thinks to answer by this dogmatic annunciation is the enclosure of his antagonist in a net, by means of my often cited acknowledgment of the necessity of the Spirit's influence to conversion; but he ought to have seen that his object could not be obtained, while I affirm with as much emphasis that men can turn to God without the Spirit, as that without him they can understand the Gospel. He should have seen also, I think, that he could not shut me up to his conclusion, until he had constrained me to admit his premises. In truth I do not admit them, and for this I shall now proceed to show cause.

"According to the Word of God," says Mr. Haldane, "conversion and the knowledge of the truth are convertible terms." Now I admit that the word knowledge is often used in Scripture to denote a state of actual piety and privilege; but this is not Mr. Haldane's position. In saying that "conversion and the knowledge of truth are" in the Scriptures "convertible terms," he evidently means—or he means nothing to the purpose—that knowledge always denotes conversion.

Now, if it were as Mr. Haldane affirms, it could not in any way affect the argument before us. Should it be found that the sacred writers always use the word know to indicate more than mere knowledge, namely, a holy relish and appreciation of divine truth, the effect of this would be merely to withdraw this word from use in certain cases, without making any change at all in the things with which we have to do.

To know is one thing, to love and practise what we know is another; and this is as true concerning the Gospel as concerning any other object of knowledge. Accordingly, when we disengage ourselves from the particular word know, we find this distinction broadly and perpetually recognized in the inspired volume. "If I had not come and done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both *seen* and hated both me and my Father," John xv. 24. "He that *heareth* these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, I will liken him to a foolish man that built his house upon the sand," Matt. vii. 26. "Walk in the light, while ye *have the light*," John xii. 36. The whole matter would thus resolve itself into a mere idiom of language; the Greek using the word know to express appreciation, and the English for the most part restricting its signification to understanding.

Let us, however, for the sake of an experiment, take Mr. Haldane at his own showing, and examine one of his own criticisms by the light of his axiom, that "conversion and the knowledge of the truth are convertible terms." In my remarks on 1 Cor. ii. 14, I have adopted as the key to that passage—"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them"—the principle that knowledge there means participation. In this it might have been thought he would have concurred; but it is not so. He immediately contradicts me, brings forward a number of instances in which the word know obviously means "to see, or perceive with the eyes of the mind," and affirms it to be "most evident" that "the apostle is neither speaking of bodily sight nor participation, but of mental perception," pp. 24, 25. This from a writer who asserts a few pages afterwards, that, "according to the Word of God, conversion and the knowledge of the truth are convertible terms"!

Still more conclusively to prove that the word know means nothing but "perception by the eyes of the mind," Mr. Haldane, to my great surprise, quotes John xvii. 3—"This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," p. 27. It seems to me that he should have cited this as a proof of his other assertion, that "knowledge and conversion are convertible terms." Does he mean really to say, that "perception with the eyes of the

mind" of the Father and his Son Jesus—that is, of the truths relating to them—is eternal life? Is eternal life nothing more than perception?

He goes on to say, that there are "many other passages in which the knowledge of the Gospel is represented as peculiar to those who are taught of God," p. 28; and he makes a most infelicitous quotation of John viii. 32—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Had he forgotten the preceding verse? It runs thus:—"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This Jesus said "to those Jews which believed on him," or (as the connexion shows) to those who attended his ministry with an apparent and promising teachableness. Their "continuing in his word" must imply a measure of existing knowledge; and the promise "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," can mean no less than that, by such continuance, they would be led to a growing appreciation of its excellency, and experience of its power.

Mr. Haldane devotes much attention to my interpretation of 1 Cor. ii. 11–14; and, for the better understanding of his remarks, the entire passage is inserted below.* I have said that the word know, in the latter part of the 14th verse, denotes participation. Mr. Haldane affirms that the word know must mean perception in the 14th verse, because it has this signification in the 11th. This is a clear *non sequitur*. There are many cases in which a word changes its meaning within far less space than four verses. The evidence that the word know does not mean to perceive, but to participate, lies within the verse itself, in the antithetic relation of the clauses of which it consists. "The natural man *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he *know* them." It seems to me unquestionable, either that to *receive*, in the first clause, must mean perception (which neither Mr. Haldane

* "11. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

nor any one else affirms), or that to *know*, in the second clause, must mean participation.

Mr. Haldane disapproves of my understanding "the spirit which is of God," in the 12th verse, of a temper, or state of mind, and maintains its reference to the Holy Spirit of God. He says that, in this passage, "the apostle refers to the fulfilment of the promise made by the Lord to his disciples, that he would send the Spirit of truth, who should guide them into all truth, John xvi. 13," p. 25. Perhaps so; but there is no evidence of it, either in the passage itself, or in the context. He further endeavours to prove his point by showing that the Holy Spirit is spoken of in the 11th verse. I grant this; but I still retain my view of the 12th. Why has not Mr. Haldane noticed the former part of the verse, and the obvious antithesis? It reads thus:—"Now we have received, not the spirit which is of the world, but the spirit which is of God." The latter, he insists, is the Holy Spirit. What then is the former? The harmony of the passage requires (in my judgment) that both the spirits indicated should be of the same class. If the one be personal, the other should be so, and *vice versâ*. Could Mr. Haldane endure to read it—"Now we have not received Satan, but the Holy Spirit"? And if he is constrained to read the first clause, "We have not received the temper of the world," what solid ground can he find for refusing to understand the second of "the temper which is of God"?

As to his remark that this interpretation "sanctions a method of altogether setting aside the work of the Holy Spirit," p. 25, I meet it by saying, that the surest way to undermine the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the judgment of intelligent persons, is to find it where it is not, and to adduce passages in its support which have no real application to the subject.

In order to sustain his position Mr. Haldane presses into his service the 13th verse, in which the Holy Spirit is expressly spoken of; but does he not know that the use of the phrase the Holy Spirit in one verse proves nothing concerning the meaning of the word spirit in the next?

Mr. Haldane is dissatisfied with my explanation of the term "foolishness," as meaning things worthless and disagreeable. He cites instances from the preceding chapter in which the term foolishness "is opposed to wisdom," and

hence he concludes that, "when the apostle says that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man, he repeats what he had dwelt upon so much in the preceding chapter, respecting the blindness and ignorance of the natural man," p. 28. Mr. Haldane thinks, then, that, for spiritual things to be foolishness to a natural man, is the same as his being ignorant of them. This seems to me to fail of the apostle's meaning entirely. For a thing to be foolishness to me, is certainly not for me to be ignorant of it, but for me to think it foolish, or to despise it, which accords with the interpretation I have given.

Mr. Haldane disapproves of restricting the language of the apostle, in 1 John v. 20,* to inspired men. "Throughout the epistle," says he, "the apostle classes his brethren along with himself," and says "*We* know," p. 31. But, whatever may be the design of this form of expression, it is beyond dispute, I suppose, that the apostle was informing his brethren of things which they did not know as he did, that is, by inspiration of God, and which they would not have known at all unless they had been made acquainted with them by himself, or by some other inspired authority. The expression Οἴδαμεν, *We know*, seems to be simply equivalent to the English phrase, It is certain. Let us, however, take Mr. Haldane on his own ground, and conceive that to every believer God has given "an understanding," in the sense of "a faculty of knowledge." What follows? Clearly, that divine grace makes, not only a moral, but a physical change in men; that it augments the number of our rational faculties; and that, whereas unregenerate men have one "understanding," the regenerate man has two. Does Mr. Haldane believe this?

In reply to my statement that "every man of sound mind is capable of understanding the Scripture in its general truths," Mr. Haldane replies, that, if I mean "the moral law," he has "no objections to this statement;" "but, if the way of salvation by the Son of God is intended," he demurs to it, p. 32. Undoubtedly I mean both; and I do not see with what consistency Mr. Haldane can admit the former

* "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

and deny the latter. He says, indeed, that the latter is contradicted by "the whole tenor of Scripture," quoting in support of this sweeping allegation Matt. xvi. 17, and 1 Cor. ii. 12. The second passage is one of which I have been disputing the interpretation with him, and one which, therefore, cannot fairly be brought into the argument. The first is Christ's declaration to Peter on his confession of the Messiah—"Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." This is no contradiction at all to what I have asserted. Nor, in truth, does Mr. Haldane really mean to contradict me; for all that he affirms is that "no man knows the truth as it is in Jesus, but he that is taught of God." This is my own doctrine; and it leaves intact the position which he was apparently about to controvert, that every man of sound mind is *capable* of understanding it without such teaching.

"On the whole," says Mr. Haldane, "Mr. Hinton has completely failed in his attempt to prove that any child of Adam can understand the Gospel, except by the teaching of the Spirit of God," p. 31. It is then a happiness for the cause of truth, that, wherein I have failed, Mr. Haldane has succeeded; as will appear by a quotation from the work before me, which I make with great pleasure.

"As to the Gospel being understood by all," says he, "it is true in one sense, and false in another. Men may understand that the Gospel represents them as lost and condemned, and reveals salvation by faith in Jesus. They may see that it places all men upon the same level—that the murderer and blasphemer are invited to the enjoyment of eternal life precisely on the same footing as the most benevolent philanthropist—that publicans and harlots are nearer the kingdom of God than devout and self-righteous religionists. So far it is quite intelligible; but men cannot understand *how* these things should be. No evidence can convince them; such doctrine is to them a stumbling-block and foolishness. When the high-priest asked the Lord Jesus, 'Art thou the Christ, the son of the blessed?' he perfectly understood the Lord's reply; but that the king Messiah, of whom such glorious things were written, should stand as a friendless culprit before his bar, was a stumbling-block which he could not overstep. The Greeks, who sought after wisdom, heard the apostles affirm that there was no salvation except through

faith in a man who had been crucified as a malefactor at Jerusalem. This doctrine was foolishness to them: they understood the terms of the proposition; but the truth which it contained was so completely opposed to all their preconceived notions, so much at variance with what they termed 'reason and common sense,' that they treated it with scorn and contempt," pp. 28, 29.

Mr. Haldane has here felicitously expressed, and scripturally demonstrated, exactly what I mean. The sense in which he admits that the Gospel may be "understood by all," is precisely that in which I mean to assert that all can understand it. It is to prove and support this position that I have adduced both general and scriptural arguments; and I am delighted to number Mr. James Haldane amongst its defenders.

Mr. Haldane accepts my challenge to explain the phrases spiritual truth and spiritual perception, p. 23. Spiritual truth, he tells us, is "the truth as it is in Jesus." I thank him for this very lucid explanation. But what is "the truth as it is in Jesus"? If it be more than the truth relating to Jesus, I must again tax Mr. Haldane's kindness to say what more. If not, his definition corresponds with mine—"truth relating to religion"—and points out, not any difference of nature between the truth called spiritual and other truth, but merely a peculiarity in the subject to which it relates. According to Mr. Haldane himself, spiritual truth is nothing more than truth relating to spiritual (or religious) things. He further explains himself, however, by saying, "Spiritual truths are those which flesh and blood cannot reveal, but which God reveals by his Spirit to the heirs of salvation." He does not, of course, intend by this that all pious persons are favoured with a strict and proper revelation of the Gospel; he can mean no more than that all are, by the gracious influences of the Spirit, "taught of God." His explanation, therefore, amounts to this—spiritual truth is truth which cannot be learned without divine teaching. This is no explanation at all, and moreover assumes the very point in dispute. Whether the Gospel can or cannot be understood without divine teaching is the matter under discussion.

Of spiritual perception he says that it is "the perception of spiritual things, as opposed to natural perception, or the

perception of natural things." This division of the objects perceived into different classes, establishes no difference whatever in the mental act which has relation to them. Admitting, for argument's sake, that some objects on which the mind may be exercised are natural and others spiritual, it does not follow that the act of the mind towards them is not one and the same. Perception, as an act of the mind, appears to be essentially one, whatever be the object perceived; and to me it is inconceivable how it can differ, whether I contemplate science or religion, whether I hate the Saviour or revere him. I regard the phrase spiritual perception as taking the word perception out of its strict and proper meaning, and denoting, not a mere act of the understanding but an exercise of the understanding combined with a suitable state of the affections, or, as I have said, "the perception of religious truth with a corresponding feeling." In this Mr. Haldane does not far differ from me; for he says, "spiritual perception is always accompanied with a corresponding feeling," p. 23. He has said nothing, however, to show that perception itself differs in any one case from the same act of the mind in another.

In vindicating the general intelligibility of the Scriptures, I have said that "a proposition is not to be set down as unintelligible because it contains or asserts what is mysterious." To this Mr. Haldane replies, that "what we are altogether unaccustomed to frequently appears impossible," p. 19. And, in illustration of this sentiment, he adduces first the king of Siam, who "thought it a mockery" when the French ambassador said that in the winter men walked upon the water; and next the Indian chief, who was shot as "too great a liar to live," for saying he had seen at New York "wigwams five stories high," pp. 19, 21. He employs these facts to authorize an inference that "heavenly and eternal things" would probably "be foolishness to all who have not the Spirit." Mr. Haldane knows that I readily admit this, and I cannot conceive why he has taken so much trouble to prove it. However, he is kind enough to furnish me here with another explicit admission of all I contend for. He says that the king of Siam "*perfectly understood* the proposition" of the French ambassador.

To my assertion of the intelligibility of the proposition that God was manifest in the flesh, Mr. Haldane replies in

the words of the apostle, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 3," p. 21. On this I have to remark that the apostle speaks of receiving the doctrine, while I have spoken of understanding it. The citation is not relevant.

"The measure of understanding," I have said, "which suffices for a man to reject the Gospel, certainly might suffice for embracing it." "But both Scripture and experience," replies Mr. Haldane, "teach us that such *is not* the case," p. 22; meaning, of course, to recall the admitted fact that many of those who know the Gospel do not receive it. This, however, does not come to the point. I have laid it down—and by his silence Mr. Haldane concedes it to me—that a knowledge of the Gospel is implied in the rejection of it; and then I have added, that a degree of knowledge which is sufficient for its rejection might (although it does not) serve for its reception. This Mr. Haldane does not deny; nor need I, consequently, add any thing in its confirmation. It is plain that a sinner cannot reject the Gospel, without understanding enough of it to provoke his dislike. But those truths of the Gospel which provoke a sinner's dislike are the very elements which ought to command his acquiescence: consequently, so far as knowledge is concerned, he has now gone far enough; what is henceforth wanting is that he should ponder and apply what he knows.

At the following passage Mr. Haldane is indignant. "Some parts [of the Bible] may be obscure; but, if other parts be plain, then to this extent it is available to its professed design." I will not transcribe the severe rebuke which this sentence, unfairly insulated, has provoked, but will simply restore the offending passage to its proper attitude. I am arguing with those who allege that the Bible is useless as a revelation of God's will, because it cannot be understood. To this my reply in substance is, "If the whole Bible cannot be understood, part of it can, and this is enough for my argument. So far *you must admit* it is adapted to its professed design, as a means of instruction for mankind." There is no harm, I hope, in thus attempting to prevent men from turning the difficult parts of the Bible into a plea for neglecting the plain ones.

"I am very willing," I have added, "that what cannot be understood should be passed by, provided what can be under-

stood be pondered and obeyed." To this Mr. Haldane makes two replies, the first of which will be effectually disposed of by the second, and the second by Mr. Haldane himself. The first reply is that, "if so, every thing in the Gospel must be passed by, till men are enlightened in the knowledge of the truth." This reply is clearly answered by the second, in which Mr. Haldane says, that "there are many things in revelation which correspond with men's natural apprehensions;" subsequently adding, that the "grand truth of the Gospel can only be learned by the teaching of the Holy Spirit," p. 18. This last assertion I meet with his own express admission (p. 55), that men "are able to apprehend" the Gospel, being blind only "to its glory and excellency."

In a subsequent page, Mr. Haldane notices my view of Isaiah vi. 9:—"Go, and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." I have observed that this language indicates, "not a defective capacity to know, but a habit of inattention to what may be known; not any thing amiss in the eye, but a closing of it against the light." On this Mr. Haldane remarks "that not perceiving, or understanding, is not synonymous with a habit of inattention," p. 53. This is true, but not to the purpose. I have not represented the terms as synonymous. What I have said is, that the prophet uses them in this place to denote a habit of inattention. Will Mr. Haldane deny this? He continues, "We sometimes see men's attention engrossed with the subject of religion, while they derive no comfort from it." It may be so; but this may be because the topics by which they are engrossed, although "religious," are not consolatory. Does Mr. Haldane mean to say, that, when we find men's attention engrossed with any subjects, religious or otherwise, their feelings are not in a corresponding manner excited? "Doubtless," he adds, "men's love of darkness, and hatred of the light, prevent their receiving the truth as it is in Jesus." It is gratifying to hear so much from such a quarter: but how is it that, after this, we hear the same writer asking, "If there be 'nothing amiss in the eye,' why does God promise to give men 'eyes to see'?" My acquaintance with holy Scripture is but very imperfect, I admit; but I really must ask Mr. Haldane to specify the chapter and verse where such a promise is recorded. "Why," he continues, "does [God] describe them as 'blind' requiring

to have their eyes 'opened,' or anointed with eye-salve, *that they may see?* Rev. iii. 18," p. 54.

The italics with which Mr. Haldane has marked the last words indicate the importance which he attaches to the phrase he has quoted, and they require me to pause. I have recently been asserting that men do see; now here is one text which describes them as blind, and another which speaks of anointing their eyes that they may see. In this dilemma I comfort myself with the reflection, that it is an excellent thing to be in good company—I do not now mean that of Mr. Haldane, which is eminently good, but that of the prophet Isaiah, which is still better. For it is Isaiah who says that men do see; and if Mr. Haldane has any inclination to lock Isaiah and John in an inextricable difficulty, he must do his pleasure. But has not Mr. Haldane learned that the metaphorical use of language assumes a wide latitude, and that the same elements are not always used in the same sense in the metaphors of Holy Writ?

The question, however, is an important one. Why do the Scriptures represent men as blind? According to Mr. Haldane, this is to teach us that men have not "eyes to see," but that they are really destitute of the faculty of mental perception in relation to religious truth. Yet one would think he must find some embarrassment in holding this sentiment, if it were only from his own assertion in the next page (founded on John ix. 41), that, "if men were blind" (of course, in the sense of not having 'eyes to see,') "they would have no sin," p. 55. He endeavours to avoid this conclusion, indeed, by saying that men "have *sufficient light* to render them responsible;" but what can be the use of light to a person who has no eyes? Let Mr. Haldane admit that men have eyes as well as light, and he may establish an intelligible responsibility; but not otherwise.

A direct and insuperable objection, however, to the notion that men are said to be blind because they have no eyes, arises from the declaration of the prophet that they actually see, which demonstrates that they possess the faculty of sight. And Mr. Haldane is obliged to admit this; since in his remark on John xv. 24—"now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father"—he says, "Christ had *exhibited to them* the character of God," "but the natural enmity of their hearts led them to turn with loathing and

disgust from the heavenly vision," p. 55. Exactly so. The fact then was, not that they could not see, but that they would not look. As to what is meant by men's being blind, Mr. Haldane—for he is a most accommodating opponent—himself shall tell us. "We agree with our author," says he, "when he says 'there is one sense in which men are blind to religious truth, and another in which they are not blind to it.' They are blind to its glory and excellency, but they are . . . able to apprehend" it, p. 56. Most just and admirable! Men are said to be blind, therefore, not because they are not "able to apprehend" the Gospel, but because they do not see "its glory and excellency." In other words, they are said to be blind, not because they have no eyes, but because they will not use them. As to the prayer of the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes" (Ps. cxix. 18), with which Mr. Haldane winds up his interrogatories (p. 54), it breathes the desire of a good man (and therefore an enlightened one) after brighter discoveries of "the glory and excellency" of the divine testimonies.

Mr. Haldane asserts that my interpretation of Rom. xi. 7, 8—"the rest were blinded"—"is completely at variance with the obvious meaning of the passage," p. 54. There is no difference, however, between his interpretation of it and mine, except in relation to this one question—*by whom* were the Israelites blinded? I have said they were blinded "by their own pride and prejudice." Mr. Haldane says they were blinded "according to the prophecies which went before." I admit this also. And Mr. Haldane makes out no difference whatever with me, unless he means (what, however, he has not expressed) that the Israelites were blinded by God. This I do not admit; and if he asserts it, I challenge him to the proof.

CHAPTER IV.

On Independent Action.

In noticing my statement that an agent, in order to be justly responsible, must possess a power of independent action, Mr. Haldane says, "The Scriptures represent those actions which we perform most freely as having been ordained of God, and brought to pass by his agency," p. 33; and in a following page he says, that "Scripture, as well as reason, spurns the notion of creatures being endowed to act independently of their creator," p. 37. How reason spurns this notion he has not attempted to explain; but he has brought what he deems scriptural proofs, and these of two kinds.

On the one hand, he endeavours to found a general contradiction of the sentiment on the phrases, "in God we live, and move, and have our being; in his hand is our breath, and his are all our ways," p. 33. Of course I cannot deny any of these declarations, I only ask what is the meaning of them. "In his hand is our breath;" that is, as I suppose, we breathe only as long as he pleases. "His are all our ways;" that is, we are under his authority and control. "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" that is, we are sustained in existence and in action by his power. Is more than this intended? If so, what more? And by what arguments will Mr. Haldane prove that it is intended?

On the other hand we have a citation of particular instances. God "SENT" Joseph into Egypt, Jeroboam to rule over the ten tribes, Ahab to Ramoth Gilead, and Sennacherib to Jerusalem. That these are instances of God's providential direction and control of human affairs, and of the working out of his purposes thereby, is clear and unquestionable; but they indicate nothing more. If they do, it must be that the actions of these parties were God's actions, and not their own; and in this case we must say, not that God sent Joseph into Egypt, but that, in Joseph's person, he went there: not that he sent Ahab to Ramoth Gilead to be slain, but that in Ahab's person he went thither, and was himself slain. That I am doing no injustice to Mr. Haldane by this mode of argument, will be evident from his

own citation (p. 38) of 2 Sam. xii. 11:—"I WILL RAISE UP evil against thee out of thine own house, and I WILL TAKE thy WIVES before thine eyes and give them thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun." From the emphasis, which I have given exactly as marked by Mr. Haldane, it appears that he means to insist that the "horrible wickedness" suggested by Ahithophel, far from being merely made use of by God to punish David, was actually perpetrated by God himself. With what justice may it not be said that both reason and Scripture spurn this notion! A notion which directly makes God to be the author of sin, and accumulates upon his head the entire iniquities of mankind.

As another instance to his point, Mr. Haldane refers to the death of Christ, on the divine predetermination of which he greatly enlarges. But it evidently coincides in principle with the other cases, and is to have a similar answer. Here is either God availing himself of the actions of other beings to accomplish his designs, or God himself acting in them. If it was the former, there is nothing inconsistent with the independent action of creatures. If, as Mr. Haldane's argument implies, it was the latter, then it was God, and not men, who slew his Son.

That Mr. Haldane is not able to throw off from his system the consequence that God is the author of sin, appears from his guarded disclaimer of the sentiment, "in any sense which would palliate its guilt," p. 40. It is plain from this language that he does hold God to be the author of sin; he only tries to mitigate the fearful idea, by imagining that it may be held in a sense in which it shall not palliate the guilt of men. Were this possible, still the sentiment could not be held without doing awful dishonour to God—a consideration to which some weight should be attached. But it is not possible. It is to the author of sin that the criminality of it justly and inevitably belongs; and, if God be the author of it, he cannot escape. It is thenceforth himself, and not his creatures, that he should arraign and condemn.

In reference to the opinion that God, as the doer of all things, is the real author of the blindness and obduracy of men, I examined in my treatise on Responsibility the passages of Scripture on which it principally rests. Mr. Haldane says these passages "might be almost indefinitely

multiplied," p. 40; but he contents himself with the texts I have mentioned.

Two of them are Isa. xlv. 7, and Amos iii. 6: "I make peace, and create evil." "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" And to these may be added Prov. xvi. 4, quoted by Mr. Haldane, p. 45:—"The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." The gist of my observation on these is, that they do not refer to moral evil, but to natural evil; and that, consequently, they are remote from the subject. Mr. Haldane's reply, that the agents "were instruments employed by God to execute his vengeance," is true, but not to the point.

He next adverts to Rom. ix. 18:—"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." In treating this passage I have proposed to read the latter clause thus—"whom he will he treateth severely"—taking the word σκληρύνω in the sense of *treating severely*, rather than (with the authors of our common version) in that of *hardening*. To this Mr. Haldane objects, and urges various reasons to show "that the word is properly rendered in our version," p. 43.

The argument raised on this passage divides itself into two parts: the one critical, relating to the question whether σκληρύνω can with propriety be rendered in any case *to treat severely;* the other theological, relating to the question whether this sense can properly be adopted in Rom. ix. 18. I shall first attend to the question of criticism.

In order to show that σκληρύνω may be rendered *to treat severely*, I have quoted from the Septuagint Job xxxix. 16, as an instance in which it is actually so employed. Of the ostrich it is here said ἀπεσκλήρυνε τὰ τέκνα ἑαυτῆς; by our translators rendered, "she *hardeneth herself against* her young ones." I have styled this an unhappy rendering, for which Mr. Haldane complains that I have shown "no reason," p. 42. I have, then, two reasons for it. The first is, that the rendering in question is not grammatically correct. Lexicographers determine that the meaning of ἀπεσκλήρυνω is not *to harden one's self against*, but simply, like σκληρύνω, *to harden*. Consequently, if *harden* is to be the rendering, ἀπεσκλήρυνε τὰ τέκνα ἑαυτῆς means "she *hardens* her young ones;" which no one (so far as I know) conceives to be the idea intended.

My second reason for thinking that our version is unhappy is, that it does not correctly represent the fact intended. The ostrich, instead of placing her eggs in a nest, as birds generally do, hides them in the sand, and so exposes them to more peril than other animals of her class; but she is not *hardened against them*—that is, she does not either intend unkindness, or show neglect. The altitude of her frame unfits her for sitting on her eggs, while the warmth of the sand renders that a fit medium for hatching them; so that she does the best thing possible with them, and is known to watch them in their perilous position with sagacious care. These are the reasons for which I thought, and for which I still think, our version an unhappy one.

But let us now inquire whether warrant exists for an alteration of it. This is, of course, a question of authority. Now I refer, I believe, to a high standard when I say, that in Biel's *Thesaurus Philologicus* (a lexicon to the Septuagint) we have the following:—"Ἀποσκληρύνω * * *induro, duriter tracto (to harden, to treat severely).* Job xxxix. 16, *ἀπεσκλήρυνε τὰ τέκνα ἑαυτῆς, duriter tractat pullos suos (she treateth severely her young ones).*" This authority will be sufficient on the critical question. If it wanted confirmation, however, I might further refer to a certain commentator, Nobilius, whom Mr. Haldane consulted (apparently *after* he had written his strictures, for the whole affair is comprehended in a note), and who "explains the word" in the same manner. Mr. Haldane, attempts, indeed, to escape out of the hands of Nobilius, by saying that "in the text, he renders it harden," although in a note he explains it as above. I do not see the logic of this. Notes, as I understand them, are to show the meaning of the text, not the text to nullify the import of the notes.

After this reference to Nobilius, Mr. Haldane makes the dogmatical announcement, that *to harden* "is the uniform meaning of the word." Absolutely unsupported as this assertion is by reference to literary authority, I am tempted to apply to it some strong epithet; but I forbear. I ask only whether the gentleman who penned it really thought that the world was to be led blindfold, in a question of Greek criticism, by the opinion of Mr. James Haldane, of Edinburgh.

As a further example of the use of *σκληρύνω*, in a manner favouring the sense I attach to it in Rom. ix., I have

cited 2 Chron. x. 4:—"Thy father *made* our yoke *grievous*" —*ἐσκλήρυνε τὸν ζυγὸν ἡμῶν*. In reference to this Mr. Haldane says, "Our author would not probably say 'treated our yoke severely.'" Undoubtedly not. Neither, probably, would Mr. Haldane say "hardened our yoke." The phrase is, no doubt, properly rendered in our version; it shows, however, how aptly the word *σκληρύνω* was used when severity of treatment was to be expressed, and this is the purpose for which I cited it.

Now that we are upon this subject, and especially as Mr. Haldane is hard to be satisfied, we may as well refer to two other places in the Old Testament in which *σκληρύνω* is employed. One of them is Gen. xlix. 7:—"Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for *it was cruel*"—*ἐσκληρύνθη*. The other is Judges iv. 24:—"And the hand of the children of Israel prospered and *prevailed* (*σκληρυνομένη*) against Jabin, king of Canaan." On these passages, in conjunction with Job xxxix. 16, and 2 Chron. x. 4, Bretschneider *(Lexicon Manuale)* remarks that *σκληρύνω* is to be understood in them of harsh and severe treatment—"*de scevitia et duritie in agendo legitur.*" Will Mr. Haldane still affirm that *to harden* "is the uniform meaning of the word"?

Having thus disposed (as I trust, satisfactorily) of the critical question, and shown that no injustice is done to the word *σκληρύνω* by rendering it to *treat severely*, I shall now proceed to inquire whether this sense of it can be suitably adopted in Rom. ix. 18.

It is, of course, proper to observe here, that the suggestion is not my own. It has, if not decisive, at all events highly respectable critical authority. It is suggested by Ernesti, and adopted by both Bretschneider and Schleusner. I cannot, therefore, be accused of any presumption in adopting it also.

To this it may be added, that the structure and point of the sentence plead strongly in favour of the sense contended for. The parallelism so characteristic of the scriptural style is evidently exhibited in this passage, and it leads to a strong expectation of antithetic meaning, as well as construction. If, however, we read it, as in our version—"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," there is no antithesis between the members at all.

Treating a person severely, on the contrary, is the opposite of treating one kindly; and the point thus thrown into the sentence pleads strongly, as I have said, for the correctness of the rendering.

I should repeat with confidence—I have already said it in my treatise on Responsibility—that the congruity of the rendering with the scope of the apostle's argument decidedly enforces it, were it not that Mr. Haldane pointedly meets me on this ground, and affirms that the context rather demonstrates its impropriety.

"The passage itself," says he, "contains a demonstration that the word is properly rendered in our version," page 43. This alleged demonstration is derived from the immediate sequence of the 18th and 19th verses. "18. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" Mr. Haldane assumes a close connexion between these two verses; and says, "to the assertion (in the 18th verse) as it stands in our version, the objection necessarily suggests itself. If God hardens whom he will, why doth he find fault with any whom he hath hardened?" P. 46.

My reply to this is, that the close connexion of the 18th and 19th verses is erroneously assumed. Looked upon with a broader glance, the chapter divides itself into sections, commencing respectively with the 1st, the 6th, the 14th, and the 19th verses.* Each of these sections is compactly

* Leaving the reader to refer (as of course he will) to the passage as he will find it in his New Testament, I cannot refrain from adding a version of it of which the entire responsibility belongs to myself. It is arranged, not poetically, but on bishop Jebb's principles of Scripture parallelism.

1. I protest by Christ that I speak the truth,
   And by the Holy Spirit that I do not lie,
   (My conscience bearing witness to me)
2. When I declare that I suffer much grief, and incessant anguish of heart,
3. (I even sought to be devoted by Christ for them)
   For my brethren, my natural kindred.
4. They are the posterity of Israel;
   To them pertain the privilege of sonship and the schechinah,
   And the covenants, and the promulgation of the law,
   And the Levitical service, and the promises.
5. The patriarchs were their ancestors,
   And descended from them in his human nature, is the Christ,
   Who is God over all, worthy to be praised for ever. Amen.

devoted to one sentiment. In the first the apostle deplores the alienated and rejected condition of his nation, ver. 1–5. In the second he shows that this does not imply a failure of the divine promise, ver. 6–13. In order to demonstrate this he introduces the doctrine of election, illustrating it by the difference made by God, both between the children of Abraham, and between the children of Rebecca. This topic furnishes to him the matter of the third section, the object of which is to show that the preference thus exhibited involves

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6. The spiritual condition of Israel, however, doth not imply that the promise of God hath failed,
Since not all the descendants of Israel are Israel in the spiritual sense of the promise.
7. Just so not all the descendants of Abraham are his children in the literal sense of the promise.
But the tenor of it was, Thy posterity by Isaac shall be selected.
8. That is to say, not the natural children are the children intended by God;
On the contrary, the posterity intended consists of promised children.
9. For a promise was made in this respect; namely,
According to this appointment will I come,
And a son shall be borne by Sarah.
10. And this was not the only restriction.
For, in addition, Rebecca having conceived by our father Isaac,
11. Now the children not yet being born,
Nor having wrought either good or evil,
This was done to maintain the sovereign purpose of God,
Which originates, not in merit, but in his own pleasure.
12. It was said to her, the elder child shall be subordinate to the younger:
13. As it is written, I have preferred Jacob,
And I have made Esau secondary.

14. What then is to be concluded from this representation?
Are not the ways of God inequitable?
By no means.
15. Thus to Moses he declares,
I will have mercy on those on whom I may have mercy,
And I will compassionate those whom I may compassionate.
16. That is to say, his favours are not conferred through our desires or our efforts,
But through his sovereign goodness.
17. Further, he saith in the Scripture to Pharaoh,
For this purpose I have elevated thee,
That I might exhibit my power by thee,
And proclaim my glory through all the earth.
18. That is to say, whom he will he treateth bountifully,
And whom he will he treateth severely.

19. Thou wilt further say to me, Why doth he yet lay blame?
For who hath frustrated his purpose?

no injustice, ver. 14–18. The principle of the argument employed by the apostle to demonstrate this point is, that the preference exercised by God relates merely to the unequal distribution of benefits. Accordingly he first quotes an assertion of divine sovereignty made to Moses, which refers to the showing of mercy exclusively; and when he mentions, as his second illustration, the case of Pharaoh, whom God ultimately overwhelmed with judgments, his idea is the same. In raising this monarch to the throne of Egypt, God had in sovereign beneficence preferred him above many; and he was entitled to limit the continuance of his favours, egregiously abused as they were, at the point where he might think it most illustrative of his own power and glory to let justice loose on so ripe a criminal. There is no injustice, therefore, the apostle argues, even where treatment is ultimately severe; since the only department in which God claims to exercise sovereignty is that of his bounty. In the 19th verse, where the fourth section begins, he supposes the objector to say—"But there is at all events unfairness; for God yet finds fault, where his own will (or preference) is the cause of the difference:" and it is to this objection that he goes on to reply, to ver. 29. Now the point I wish to establish is, that there is no immediate connexion between the 19th verse and the 18th, as Mr. Haldane affirms; in fact, the section commencing with ver. 19 stands connected, as a whole, with the section constituted by ver. 6–13.

Whether I have correctly traced the line of thought in this chapter the reader must judge; but, if I have, it is evident that Mr. Haldane's alleged "demonstration that the word *σκληρύνω* [*harden*] is properly rendered in our version" altogether fails.

Such being the scope of the apostle's argument, I again affirm that the fact appropriate to it in the passage before us is a comparative severity of treatment, and that the idea of hardening has no fitness whatever. God (the apostle argues) is not unjust in bestowing favours unequally: not when they are without limit, for he has an equitable right to confer them so; not when they are limited, and are followed by vengeance, for the benefits only were sovereign, the vengeance was just. Consequently, without injustice, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he treateth with comparative severity.

That this explanation will not satisfy Mr. Haldane is very likely, but I submit it with confidence, nevertheless, to the consideration of scriptural students.

Another ground (although not distinctly indicated) is apparently relied on by Mr. Haldane (p. 43), for assuming *harden* to be the proper translation of σκληρύνω in this place. It is that the word is introduced in immediate connexion with the case of Pharaoh, whose heart God is repeatedly said, in the Old Testament narrative, to have hardened. It ought to be observed, however, that no reference to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is indicated by the antecedent language of the apostle. If he had cited from the Old Testament a passage which stated that God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, and had then said "whom he will he hardeneth," there might have been some show of reason for assigning this meaning to the word. As it is, the assumption is wholly gratuitous. All that the apostle adduces of the history of Pharaoh is the distinguishing favour by which God raised him to the throne, and the sovereignty with which he limited his prosperity; the mention of his name, therefore, affords no more presumption that σκληρύνω here means *to harden*, than could have arisen from the apostle's using the case of Manasseh, or Sennacherib.

The only other remark of Mr. Haldane's which requires notice is the following. "It must be recollected (he says) that the severe treatment which, according to our author, God inflicts upon 'whom he will,' includes the destruction of both body and soul in hell," p. 43; and he concludes justly enough, that, if this be so, I gain very little by my interpretation. But I deny the premises. "The severe treatment which God inflicts upon 'whom he will'" (to adopt Mr. Haldane's phraseology so far) consists simply in his arresting the flow of undeserved favours, and in putting an end to that "much long-suffering" by which justice has antecedently been withheld from action. What follows beyond this limit is no matter of sovereignty at all, nor is it inflicted by God on "whom he will;" it is matter of administrative righteousness, and is inflicted on those only who deserve it. Mr. Haldane quotes the 22nd verse of the chapter, in which those who perish are spoken of as "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," p. 43; but he might have seen that the force of this phrase depends entirely on the answer to the question, *by*

whom were they fitted for destruction. That they were fitted for destruction by God, I altogether deny to be the meaning of the place. Sinners are fitted for destruction by their own iniquities; and that this is intended here, is evident from the apostle's saying that God "endured them with much long-suffering."

I now proceed to the remarks of Mr. Haldane on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, to my view of which he objects. He insists on understanding what is said on this subject in what he calls its "plain and obvious meaning," p. 48. His principal argument in support of this view is derived from the use which the apostle makes of Pharaoh's case; a topic to the merits of which I hope I have already done justice. For the rest, he admits "that God did not produce Pharaoh's wickedness," and thus concedes the only point I am anxious to maintain; but I cannot see the consistency of this with holding that, "in the plain and obvious meaning" of the terms, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. What I understand by the hardness of Pharaoh's heart is his wickedness—his pride, his rebellion against God, his obstinacy, &c.; and by hardening his heart I understand the process of making it wicked. If, therefore, God really hardened Pharaoh's heart, he produced his wickedness. How otherwise Mr. Haldane understands hardness of heart I must leave him to explain.

He makes a judicious remark, however, when he says, "There is a sense in which God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and a sense in which he hardened his own heart," p. 49. This is quite true, and much to the point, but scarcely reconcilable with his declaration that he understands the scriptural statement "in its plain and obvious meaning." What the two senses are he does not explain; but of course he must mean—that Pharaoh hardened his own heart in a literal sense, actually generating the pride and obstinacy of which the term is expressive; and that God hardened Pharaoh's heart in a sense not literal, but that he is said to have done so only as foreseeing the obstinacy which would be manifested, and as intending to overrule it for his purpose. In this I am happy to admit "there is no real inconsistency," p. 49. What is written on page 51 seems to accord with this view.

Mr. Haldane further attempts to elucidate this difficult subject, by telling us that God used certain moral methods in order to harden Pharaoh's heart; one of them being the

success allowed to the efforts of the magicians in the art of miracle-working, and another being the successive removal of the plagues on promise of amendment, p. 51. Now I think that this is giving up the point. When Mr. Haldane affirms that he understands the declaration that God hardened Pharaoh's heart "in its plain and obvious meaning," one can hardly help supposing that he intends a direct action of God on the heart of Pharaoh. He now tells us, however, that he only understands God to have used certain moral methods with him, such as long forbearance and others. This is, I conceive, very far from being "the plain and obvious meaning" of the words. I may even go further, and say that I do not think the words can be made to have this meaning at all. To use moral means with a person, is not in any sense to harden his heart. Hardness of heart may result from them, but this is neither of necessity, nor through the adaptation of the means employed, but only through a perverse use of them. The successful simulation of miracles by the magicians, for example, although an element in the trial of Pharaoh, did not necessarily make him obstinate. Still less could the removal of the plagues on his promise of amendment have tended to such a result. Mr. Haldane himself admits, indeed, that the goodness of God was thus "leading him to repentance," and that Pharaoh turned it to a different issue by "his hardness and impenitent heart." Here is another instance in which he first strenuously maintains a point, and then abandons it.

I cannot pass from this topic without declaring my dissent from the doctrine, that God used these moral means with Pharaoh for the purpose of hardening his heart. The frightful imputation which it involves on the character of God, makes one instinctively shrink from it; and, for my own part, I rejoice in the conviction that it is utterly destitute of scriptural warrant. The severest moral means employed by God are to the heart of man nothing more than a test; and by far the greatest part of them are adapted beyond all measure to lead men to duty and to happiness—unquestionably, the purpose for which they are employed.

I have cited Ezek. xxi. 19, 21, as an example of that feature of the prophetic style, by which the prophet is sometimes directed to do what he is in reality only to foretell. On this Mr. Haldane remarks, that "much more is foretold"

than I have mentioned, p. 52. Perhaps so; but this is of no consequence. My only point is that foretelling, and not doing, was the real action of the prophet.

With a similar view I have quoted Isaiah vi. 9, "Make the heart of this people fat," &c.; my point being that the prophet was not directed "to produce such effects upon the people, but to declare that they did exist, and were foreseen." In this Mr. Haldane agrees. "No one supposes," says he, "that the prophet was to produce such effects upon the people; . . . but he foretells what should certainly take place," p. 52. Whether he attaches any special signification to the word *should* in this passage, or whether he would think the idea at all altered by the use of the term *would*, I cannot tell. If he means by his choice of that phraseology to denote divine causation, or any other certainty than that which arises from a foreknowledge of the volitions of free agents, in this point I must differ from him.

CHAPTER V.

On Free Agency.

I HAVE insisted on a broad distinction between free and forced action, and have assumed the former as an element of equitable responsibility. Mr. Haldane—it might be surprising, but that he hates metaphysics—maintains that an action can be at the same time both forced and free; and he illustrates this remarkable philosophy by an example which he thinks must carry immediate conviction. It is as follows:—

"How can you, said one to a person in a respectable situation in life, bring upon yourself and your family so much misery by indulging in intoxication? Were you ever ready to die with thirst? was the reply. I have been very thirsty. And you felt an inexpressible desire for water? Yes. Well, such is my desire for strong liquor, and I am unable to resist it.—Here we have at once free and forced action," p. 57. It is evident from this passage that Mr. Haldane and I do not use our terms in the same meaning.

Upon what grounds Mr. Haldane would call that forced action in which a person follows his own inclination, I cannot pretend to explain; but, certainly, I have never applied the phrase to such a case. I never could do so. Whenever an agent follows his own inclination, his action is, in my judgment, free; and then only have we forced action, when some impulse other than his own inclination is the uncontrollable cause of it. I have no wish, however, to fight for words; only it is plain that Mr. Haldane's using the phrase forced action to denote what I mean by free action, deprives his illustration of all applicability to my argument.

He next marshals an array of Scripture texts, to prove that men are "led captive by the devil," and so forth. He conceived, I suppose, that I should be obliged to admit the reigning influence of sin and Satan, declared in these texts, to be inconsistent with the freedom which I have represented as necessary to responsibility. He is altogether mistaken. There is no violence employed by the god of this world in maintaining his dominion. Mr. Haldane, however, will permit me to suggest, that he does injustice to the apostle in his quotation of Rom. viii. 7. He must be quite aware that *τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς* cannot with propriety be rendered "the carnal mind." It is "the minding of the flesh;" and it relates, not to the nature of man, but to the habitual practice of man unrenewed.

Mr. Haldane is not satisfied with the distinction I have drawn between God's predetermining his own actions, and his predetermining ours. On my statement respecting regeneration and its results he remarks:—"'Voluntary action' is the necessary and inevitable consequence of regeneration, just as sensation or motion is the necessary consequence of animal life. If God predetermined to bestow life, he predetermined to bestow sensation; and, if he predetermined to regenerate any of the sons of men, he predetermined 'a resulting course of voluntary action' on the part of the regenerate," pp. 59, 60. The analogy on which he here relies is fallacious. He argues from action which is not voluntary to action which is voluntary; and consequently he argues inconclusively. Between physical and moral action there is an essential diversity, which prohibits reasoning from the one to the other. His appeal to the Scriptures is not more felicitous. He cites Eph. ii. 10:—"We are his

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." He triumphs over this quotation. "So much," says he, "for Mr. Hinton's assertion!" Let us, then, hear the apostle. In Mr. Haldane's opinion Paul affirms that God foreordained the actions of believers; in my opinion he says only that God foreordained the duty of believers. He tells us they are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, in which God hath before ordained that they should walk." Which interpretation is the more just let the reader judge.

I have said that I see neither necessity nor warrant for the idea "that God has foreordained the ungodly to perdition." Mr. Haldane thinks he catches me here, by asking the question, "Is not the perdition of the ungodly the doing of God?" Now he may see, by referring to the *Harmony of Divine Truth and Human Reason*, pp. 86 and 113, that I do not hold God to have fore-ordained all, even of his own acts. In relation to his judicial acts, he has foreordained only the principles of his government; the sanctions of which he awards, not according to sovereign purposes, but according to the eventual actions of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

Detached Topics.

In the present chapter I shall notice such observations of Mr. Haldane as have not found place in the preceding ones.

On my statement that the moral law, since it demands only what accords with our "strength," is not "an inflexible standard," requiring "an absolute perfection of character, and the same perfection in all circumstances," he asks—"Why, then, does the apostle deny that any law *could* have given life? Gal. iii. 21," p. 63. My answer to this is, that the apostle has made no such assertion. He says, "If *the law* could have given life, verily life should have been by the law;" evidently meaning the law of Moses. That the moral law would have given life if obeyed, is clear beyond dispute

from the words of the same apostle, Rom. ii. 6, *seq.* "Why does he affirm," Mr. Haldane proceeds, "that we are 'without strength'? Rom. v. 6." The context and use of this phrase demonstrate that it means a state, not of weakness, but of misery. "How can he say," Mr. H. continues, "that in him 'dwelleth no good thing' (Rom. vii. 18) if he naturally possessed means of producing love to God?" Consistently enough, I rejoin; since "the means of producing love to God" is not a "good thing." It is mere machinery, which may be turned either to a good use or a bad one.

Mr. Haldane insists that the law "demands absolute perfection;" and he brings two scripture proofs. The first is, "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all," James ii. 10. Alas! for my blindness. I really cannot see how this demonstrates that the law demands absolute perfection. Doubtless, he that violates one precept of the law is a transgressor of the law as a whole; but this is not the point. His next proof is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. There is nothing about "absolute perfection" here. Beyond question the law demands obedience to all its precepts, which is all that is here asserted.

Mr. Haldane further instructs us that the law "demands the same of a man and of an angel," p. 64. Not knowing what the law demands of angels, I shall be silent on this matter; but, if all that Mr. Haldane means be that supreme love to God, and equal love to our neighbour, seem to be essential elements of moral rectitude throughout the universe, I entirely agree with him. To the use which he makes of Matt. v. 48, however, I object. The precept there given by our Lord, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," relates simply to the exercise of benevolence in a manner unobstructed by provocation, or ill desert. So fail all the proofs which were to demonstrate my error. I am yet at liberty to repeat, therefore, that the law, by requiring us to love God "with all our strength," makes our strength the measure of its demand.

Mr. Haldane says that when I speak of reconciliation to God as a change in the state of our minds towards him, I "lose sight of the meaning of reconciliation, as employed in Scripture." And he brings various instances in which the word denotes expiation. I admit his interpretation of these

passages; but I ask him to tell me in what sense the term is used in 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, where the apostle says that he was entrusted with "the ministry of reconciliation," and tells us that he was continually addressing to men the entreaty, "Be ye reconciled to God." This cannot refer to expiation, but must refer to a change of mind. The truth is, that the word is used in Scripture in two senses, while in common discourse it is now used in only one. As meaning expiation it is now obsolete, and it is on all accounts desirable that it should be used exclusively (as I have used it) to denote a change of mind. Does Mr. Haldane mean by his complaint to admit, that, in my own meaning of reconciliation, my reasoning is unanswerable?

To my argument that we must be able to produce love to God, because we have produced enmity, which is its opposite, Mr. Haldane replies in the following terms. "Man did not produce enmity to his Maker by 'a process to which the mind is competent' (quoted from my Treatise on Responsibility), but by an act of disobedience, and consequently coming under the curse of the law," p. 61. He here makes an equivocal use of the word man, by means of which he diverts the attention of his readers to a subject altogether different from that which I am discussing. Man, says he (meaning Adam), produced enmity to his Maker by an act of disobedience, that is, of course, by eating the forbidden fruit. Now it is obvious that I am not speaking of enmity to God as produced by Adam (by whatever method), but of that state of mind as produced by ourselves. His reply, therefore, has no relevancy to my argument, unless it is to be understood as asserting, by implication, that the enmity towards God which is displayed by the whole human race was produced by Adam in his first transgression. If Mr. Haldane should say that he means this, my rejoinder would be that he here confounds things which differ. That, in consequence of Adam's sin, his posterity are born with a bias to evil, I have already admitted; but enmity towards God is quite another thing. I cannot conceive of enmity having any existence, except in a being whose rational powers are developed. It is essentially a voluntary state of mind, a cherished affection. If Mr. Haldane does not admit this, I will not contend with him about a word. All that I have then to say is, that what I mean by enmity is a

voluntary state of mind, and that, since he will not allow me to denote this by the term in question, we must agree upon some other word for the purpose. My position is, that it was not Adam who produced the voluntary state of my mind towards God. I have myself produced it. And my argument is, that, since I have produced a state of mind which is evil, I am capable (by only a different use of the same machinery) of producing one that is good. To this argument it still remains for Mr. Haldane to reply.

With the view of showing (as I suppose) that I am in error in asserting man's competency to his duty, Mr. Haldane refers to the "various figures which are employed to denote the change which takes place" in conversion, p. 65. He mentions new birth, new creation, and resurrection, or "quickening together with Christ." He says, "Surely the child is not the cause of its own birth!" He asks, "Does then the creature produce itself?" And "are the dead raised by their own exertions?" To these questions he thinks I shall reply, that "such language is to be understood figuratively and analogically, and not literally," p. 66. I shall not do so, however; and the next time he suggests a reply for me, I hope he will think of one more to the purpose. In the present case the reply he puts into my mouth would be altogether nugatory, because it is only as figures that Mr. Haldane himself has introduced the representations in question.

My reply is, that the whole passage is beside the mark. Many times over, within the eighty pages which he has written against me, has Mr. Haldane quoted my admission that conversion in all cases results from divine influence, as it clearly must, because men will not perform it without. Is it not, marvellous, therefore, that he should expect to include me by such questions as these—Does the creature produce itself? Is the child the cause of its own birth? Are the dead raised by their own exertions? It is plain even to obviousness, that interrogatories of this class can have no bearing upon me, till I affirm that sinners *do* turn to God of themselves.

Let me now be permitted to ask in return, how it was that Mr. Haldane, seeing he was bringing forward these representations as proofs of "the inability of fallen man to turn to God," p. 66, did not put the question in a different

form. He should have said, one might think, *can* a creature produce itself, if he meant his question to convey a proof that it cannot. And since, for some cause which it is not for me to explain, he has not done so, I will do it for him, and give my answer. Let the reader then fix his mind on the question—Can the creature produce itself? My answer is, that the question relates, not to *conversion*, but to *regeneration;* an act which I have always distinguished from conversion, and have constantly affirmed to be, not man's duty, but God's prerogative. I am quite aware that, in the distinction I thus draw between regeneration and conversion, I shall not have Mr. Haldane's concurrence; but I hold it nevertheless, and request those who wish to acquaint themselves fully with my views, and the grounds on which they rest, to consult the third edition of my work on the Holy Spirit, pp. 232, 246. I may add here, that I do not admit Mr. Haldane's application of Eph. i. 20. An examination of the entire passage demonstrates, I think, that it is an introduction to evangelical privileges, and not regeneration, which is there denoted by the phrase "quickened together with Christ."

Mr. Haldane incidentally adverts to the manner in which I have expressed myself concerning the New Testament demoniacs, from which he infers a doubt whether I hold them to have been really possessed. He here entirely mistakes me. Not only do I hold this sentiment, but my language, instead of casting a doubt on it, as Mr. Haldane alleges, is strongly expressive of my conviction. The parenthesis—"(I assume, for the value of the illustration, the literal import of the narrative)"—inserted in an argument with persons who require every thing to be proved, and who are likely especially to challenge it here, amounts only to this—'I use this fact without stopping to prove it, as I adduce it only for the purpose of illustration.' This surely declares my own belief, and merely tends to hold in abeyance an imminent objection of the party with whom I am arguing.

Having now paid, as I hope, due attention to Mr. Haldane's principal observations, I may notice the following sentence:—"There are various other passages of our author's work which we might have noticed; but what has been said will give a sufficiently accurate view of his system, and of the fallacious arguments by which it is defended," p. 73.

It is some consolation, after (in the author's opinion) so effective an exposure, to find it admitted that "there are other passages," even in the Treatise on Responsibility, not altogether unworthy of notice. "Other passages," indeed (whether worthy of notice or not), besides those animadverted upon by Mr. Haldane, are by no means few. Should there be any persons who will do me either the justice or the favour to read, not the Treatise on Responsibility only, but the other books I have written, they will, I think, be fully convinced that what Mr. Haldane has said is far from giving an accurate view, either of my system, or of the arguments by which it is defended. I might upon the instant cite many, even from the Treatise on Responsibility alone, of which he has taken no notice at all; but I shrink from a repetition of myself. If, however, he has not given an accurate view of my system, he has written enough to afford a sample of his mode of reply, and to show what he would have done if he had undertaken the whole task. Readers who have observed how he misses the point of the arguments he replies to, adduces inapplicable passages of Scripture, contends for erroneous interpretations, and entangles himself in contradictions, will be satisfied that it is not by such hands the tide of false doctrine (if such it be) can be stemmed. I invite a different antagonist. I court an adversary who will seize me, as a theologian, by the throat, and grapple with the entire strength of my argument. Next to blessing God if he has guided me aright, I would bless such an adversary for proving me to have been wrong.

It is now time that I should notice another passage, which occurs early in Mr. Haldane's strictures.

"Before entering on the consideration of our author's system," says Mr. Haldane, "we may observe, that he seems fully aware that his attempt to establish the responsibility of man by the train of reasoning which he has pursued, has proved a failure," p. 11. This is a somewhat grave allegation. Upon what does it rest? "He admits," Mr. Haldane continues, "that it is incapable of demonstration. He maintains that we are not called upon to reason out the fundamental truths of religion. 'We derive them,' he says, 'from the Oracles of God, and rest on them with satisfaction because they agree with our experience.' The unavoidable conclusion appears to be, that, in his disquisition on Man's

Responsibility, he has been speaking into the air." See also p. 58, where this sentiment is repeated.

This would be compact logic, if Mr. Haldane had correctly stated the object of my Treatise; in this essential point, however, he has committed an egregious mistake. According to him, I have attempted "to establish the responsibility of man, by the train of reasoning I have pursued." But, in truth, I have aimed at no such object. I have (as he elsewhere recommends, p. 9) assumed the fact of man's responsibility on the testimony of Scripture, confirmed by our experience and consciousness; and I have limited myself to an inquiry "whether the proper elements of responsibility are to be found in the nature and condition of man." In other words, I have attempted, not "to establish the responsibility of man," but to evince the justice of it. In proof of this exposition of my views, I refer to the Treatise on Responsibility, pp. 2–6.

By this fair statement of my design Mr. Haldane's allegation is entirely overthrown. Nothing that I may have said concerning the difficulty of demonstrating man's responsibility by a process of reasoning touches the question of my success or failure, for I have not aimed at any such object. I have engaged myself in an inquiry into the facts of man's nature and condition, in order to ascertain whether the proper elements of a responsible state exist there. Have I succeeded in this inquiry? Have I stated truly what these elements are? and have I shown that they do exist in the nature and condition of man? These questions Mr. Haldane has not troubled himself to answer, or even to propound. I hope few other readers of my Treatise will be equally careless.

CONCLUSION.

It seems to Mr. Haldane that a Treatise on Man's Responsibility is a work of supererogation. "It is indelibly impressed," says he, "on the mind of every individual. In order to palliate their guilt men may disclaim responsibility, but their heart condemns them. A man can no more divest himself of the conviction of responsibility than of the feeling of pain," p. 5. In all this there is much truth. But it is likewise true that men may think they are held responsible unjustly, and may deem their invincible feelings on this subject unfounded and absurd. Hence may follow a conclusion that the government of God is tyrannical, rather than righteous, and many pretexts for disobedience may thus be generated in the mind. Is it of no use to dislodge these pretexts, and to show that responsibility, which men feel to be undeniable, is not unjust?

I have remarked that, in the present day, "the teachers of religion are challenged to the exercise of reason, and dragged to the bar of common sense." On this Mr. Haldane reminds me, that "it is one of the characteristics of the latter [last] days that men should be 'heady and high-minded'"—that "it is the avowed purpose of the Gospel to make 'foolish the wisdom of this world'"—and that "believers are cautioned against being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit," pp. 6, 7. All this is true, but what is it to the purpose? Was the Gospel intended to "make foolish" the reason and common sense of men? Or is it by the just exercise of these that men will be "spoiled," as by "vain deceit"?

Reason is "liable to err," adds Mr. Haldane. No doubt of it. So is the eye; but is that an argument why either should be unemployed? Yet hear how this gentleman sets himself right at last. "God is the author of right reason, and cannot be the author of any thing contrary to it," p. 7. What a noble sentiment, and beautifully expressed! As to

"knowing infallibly what is agreeable and what is contrary to" right reason, I have said nothing about it. I agree perfectly with Mr. Haldane that our "safety" lies "in the knowledge of our own ignorance, and in dependence on God for wisdom." But how did Mr. Haldane arrive at this conclusion, unless by the exercise of his reason and common sense?

From his next sentence it appears that Mr. Haldane has greatly overrated the popularity of my writings. "Religion," says he, "has of late become fashionable"—I can assure him that Mr. Hinton's books have not—"and * * * is 'made easy for the practice of the present day.'" I am sure every one must admit that mine is a much harder system of religion than Mr. Haldane's. "We are under a strong temptation," he adds, "to mould the religion of Jesus to the prevailing taste * * * and thus to get rid of the offence of the cross," p. 8. Mr. Haldane must be as ignorant of "the prevailing taste" in religion as he is of the greater part of my writings. A more distasteful thing was never presented to the religious public in this country, than my volume on the Work of the Holy Spirit; and, as to "getting rid of the 'offence of the cross,'" generally speaking, my views have aggravated it, alike with saint and sinner, a hundredfold. It has been owing to God's mercy that I have not been overwhelmed with the *odium theologicum*.

Mr. Haldane objects to the employment of metaphysical reasoning. We have already found him objecting to the use of reason altogether, with or without metaphysics. But, if his dislike is now confined to metaphysical reasoning, he should have defined it. He will find it hard, I suspect, to hit upon any definition of it which will not entangle himself. Metaphysical reasoning, he says, "will not coalesce" with the Gospel. If it be true reasoning it will. Does Mr. Haldane think that what is metaphysical is necessarily false? "Abstruse speculations," he adds, "are directly opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus." Why so? May there not be abstruse speculations on the subject of the Trinity, for example, which nevertheless shall not be "opposed" in any degree to the doctrine of Scripture? We receive salvation "by our high imaginations being cast down," he proceeds; but "high (or proud) imaginations" are not exactly identical with metaphysical reasonings. "All our attempts," he con-

tinues, "to reconcile the wisdom of God with the wisdom of the world must issue in disappointment," p. 9; but I am making no such attempt, unless "the wisdom of the world" be identical with right reason and common sense. It is wrong, he goes on to say, "to sit in judgment upon the revelation which God has promulgated;" but it is right, I suppose, to try to ascertain what it means—which is just what I have attempted.

Mr. Haldane blames me for not relying on Scripture testimony and human consciousness, as the best evidences of responsibility, pp. 9, 10. I have only to say in reply, that I have done so. His misconception of the scope of my argument does little credit to his attention as a reader, and indicates little fitness for his occupation as a controversialist.

He reproves me for the want of a "child-like spirit," by which he means a readiness to receive upon divine testimony things which I am "unable to comprehend," pp. 15, 16. Among the things which I am unable to comprehend, he evidently includes the justice of holding men responsible whose nature and condition do not contain what I have assumed as the proper elements of responsibility. I can truly assure him, however, that I will believe this like a child if he will bring me divine testimony for it. This he has not yet done; and all that he says about a child-like spirit is only a quiet way of assuming that he is in the right and I am in the wrong.

He attempts to apply to me the sarcasm of the apostle:—"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ." "Perhaps," says he, "like our author, although 'not voluntarily mixing up plain truths with profound,' they had been constrained by their opponents to follow them where they went, and hoped they had 'successfully shown that their abstruse speculations' afforded them 'no refuge from the demands of their Maker.' *All this*, however," he continues, "appeared to the apostle the wisdom of this world," &c., p. 16.

Can I be wrong in calling this a gross controversial artifice? He first makes a gratuitous supposition that the course adopted by the Corinthians resembled mine, and then a positive assertion that my course is denounced by Paul as the wisdom of this world. I have just as good reason for saying, Perhaps, like Mr. Haldane, the Corinthians held that all men

but the elect were hopelessly accursed for Adam's sin. But what can either of us prove by attempted hits of this sort?

"Mr. Hinton admits that there are mysteries in the Scriptures," says Mr. Haldane; but he "endeavours to get rid of many of" them, p. 16. Not exactly so. I merely raise a question whether a given matter be mysterious or not. I only wish to recover from the number of supposed mysteries what is really capable of explanation. I receive the mysteries of revelation with as much reverence as Mr. Haldane; but I think I do small honour to the divine author of it, if I suffer to remain in obscurity, under the name of mysteries, truths which he intended I should explicitly understand. To say that, in using my faculties for the purpose of understanding all that I may, I am endeavouring "to get rid of mysteries," is again assuming the very point in debate.

Still further from the truth is Mr. Haldane in affirming that I wish to rid myself of "the mysteries of the Word of God, by terming them the 'mysteries of systematic theology,'" p. 16. Assuredly these two classes of mysteries are perfectly distinct, and I never meant to designate the former by the latter appellation. Neither did I mean, as Mr. Haldane supposes, to "sneer" at systematic theology itself. On the contrary, my known efforts to become a consistent systematic divine have exposed me to rebukes of an opposite kind. It is nevertheless true, that, in their efforts to reduce Christian doctrine to a system, some divines have generated mysteries of which the Word of God knows nothing; and to disabuse one's-self of these, I hope, is no offence.

Mr. Haldane considers my system "to have had an unhappy influence upon my mind," p. 73. He thinks I try "to *explain away*" the Word of God. This is pure uncharitableness, and an insinuation which I shall leave it to my writings and my ministry to repel.

He thinks further that I have been "spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit;" as a positive proof of which he quotes, from my volume on the Work of the Spirit, my statement that "the decision of the religious argument [respecting the ability of man] is involved in the principles of moral philosophy," p. 73. Is it possible, then, that Mr. Haldane does not admit the existence of a sound and just philosophy, and that he stigmatizes all exercises of the human understanding as

identical with the "vain deceit" and false philosophy which the sacred writer condemns? By what name would he call a true and accurate knowledge of the rational and moral nature of man, since to call it "moral philosophy" is obnoxious to so severe a censure?

As to my statement, it amounts merely to this—that you cannot satisfactorily exhibit the religious doctrine relating to man's ability, until you have adopted a definite view of the nature and faculties of man. You must make up your mind as to what his faculties are, and what are the mode and result of their action in common things, before you can reason clearly about their use and competency in spiritual things. When you have agreed on your general notions, and defined your terms, you will find a clear way to determine doctrinal questions. Or, in other words, "the decision of the religious question is involved in the principles of moral philosophy."

Mr. Haldane has no "doubt" of my system "being very injurious to others," p. 73. It may relieve his affliction, perhaps, to know, that there are at least some to whom it has been in a high degree salutary, and that there are cheering indications of its producing wide and lasting benefit. As to error eating "as doth a canker," that is no doubt true; but it is a text which I am quite as much entitled to apply to Mr. Haldane's system, as he to mine.

Whether any persons may be led into error by my writings I cannot tell. I hope not. At all events I shall not be responsible in any degree for their errors, if I have correctly exhibited the truth. My earnest desire and entreaty is that no one will take me for a guide; but that my readers will always refer themselves most reverently to those Holy Oracles, which are the sole fountain and standard of truth.

Mr. Haldane is afraid lest it should be held that sinners will of themselves come to Christ. That I do not hold this he well knows. I have, almost to satiety, insisted on the contrary. The only ground he finds—or fancies—for this alarming imagination is, that he thinks my system without this corollary "is palpably deficient," leading "to no practical result," and "a mere speculation," p. 91. How erroneous this notion is I have already demonstrated; and his tenacious iteration of it only shows that he is far from apprehending the true scope of my argument. He might seem, indeed, to

be of opinion that my doctrinal views cannot be understood; since he takes the pains to acquaint the public that "the late Robert Hall, with all his admitted ability and penetration, declared himself unable to comprehend" them. One thing, however, is plain enough to be universally intelligible; namely, that Mr. Haldane has either more wisdom than the eminent individual he has named, or less. Either he understands my doctrinal views, or he does not. If he does, he is wiser than Mr. Hall. If he does not, like his illustrious compeer, he should not have attempted to refute them.

THE

HARMONY OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

AND

HUMAN REASON

ASSERTED,

IN A SERIES OF ESSAYS.

PREFACE.

In the winter of 1831, I projected a course of Lectures specifically to despisers of religion, and more especially to those who founded their contempt of it upon any of the theoretical objections which the carnal heart so warmly welcomes, and which the propagators of infidelity have so industriously diffused. I had not the remotest intention of preparing these discourses for the press; but the strongly expressed conviction of many respected hearers that they were adapted to general usefulness, has induced me to commit them to a wider circulation. Their change from the form of sermons to that of Essays, which it is hoped has been effected without injury, has been dictated by a wish to facilitate their general perusal.

Before the reader can enter with propriety, or at least with a full understanding of its scope and design, on the perusal of the volume now in his hands, it is needful to request his attention to a statement, and perhaps to more than a statement—for he may require a justification, if not a defence—of the principle on which it has been written.

Its design, as the title announces, is to shew the harmony of religious truth and human reason. To obviate any misconception of this language, it may be better to specify at once some things which are *not* intended by it.

I do not mean, then, that religious truth consists of nothing more than the dictates of human reason, or that reason is a sufficient guide to the acquisition and discovery of it. The absolute necessity and inestimable value of divine revelation I hold as fundamental principles; and maintain only that the truths of religion, being discovered, approve themselves to our reason, and harmonize with the common sense of mankind.

I do not mean, further, that religious truth lies within the comprehension of human reason, or that reason is adequate to the explanation of its mysteries. On the contrary, while

the language of sacred Scripture is pre-eminently lucid, and the facts it communicates are intelligible by a child, many of them transcend comprehension, and therefore defy explanation, by the most vigorous mind. We are not competent to conceive of eternity, of omnipresence, or of foreknowledge; yet there is nothing unreasonable in believing that these are attributes of God.

I do not mean, lastly, that religious truth accords with the feelings and wishes of mankind. It is notorious, on the other hand, that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. But it is one thing for a sentiment to approve itself to our reason, and another for it to harmonize with our feelings. The feelings of men are by no means uniformly under the government of their reason, but are to be found continually at variance with it, and with the dictates of common sense. Many things may be proved to be reasonable in the highest degree, which, nevertheless, men dislike and disregard. We know they loathe and repel religion, but this is no argument against the reasonableness of it. The question is one of truth and justice, of goodness and wisdom; and the position I take is, that what is divinely exhibited as wise and good, as just and true, however displeasing to our taste, accords with the sense of truth and justice, of wisdom and goodness, universally existing in mankind.

It is assumed in this assertion, not merely that there are ideas of justice and truth, of goodness and wisdom, afloat in the world, but that mankind universally are endowed with a sensibility to such qualities, and judge of them by a common standard; and, whatever apparent or partial exceptions to this assumption might be adduced, it will probably not be seriously controverted. Blinded as the mind may be by ignorance, misled by custom, warped by interest, crushed by authority, or perverted by passion, there are nevertheless certain fundamental and invariable notions of rectitude and goodness, which are of unlimited prevalence, and which constitute in these respects the voice of human reason, or the common sense of mankind. There are innumerable cases in which all men instantly form one and the same decision, and, if their understanding could be brought into unbiassed and considerate exercise, they would do so in many more; premises from which it is evident that there exist,

throughout the whole of our species, a common sensibility and common principles of judgment. Now it is with these universal elements of human opinion that we affirm the truths of religion to harmonize. None of them are repugnant to this common sense of mankind.

In order to bring this sentiment to the test, we need only inquire whether the common sense of mankind may be relied upon to estimate objects rightly, and to judge of things as they are. If, when duly exercised, it is liable to mistake, then, undoubtedly, our position must be abandoned. But no doubt, we conceive, can justly be entertained on this point. All men may err by a defective employment of their reason, but reason itself, upon subjects to which it is competent, is never erroneous; in such cases, the mistakes of men are invariably departures from its dictates. The judgments which men form when their rational powers are brought into proper exercise, and the distorting influences of custom, example, or prejudice, are thrown aside, are always right judgments. It is obviously so in fact; our conviction that it is so leads us to aim at a dispassionate and considerate use of our understanding in our own concerns, and to repose in its decisions with confidence; and this is the only constitution under which the creation and probation of mankind, or of any other rational beings, can be contemplated with satisfaction. To suppose the contrary, that is to say, to imagine that the author of our being has placed us in circumstances in which the formation of right judgments is indispensable to us almost every moment of our lives, while the faculties he has given us for our guidance, in their most vigorous and dispassionate exercise, cannot be relied upon for the attainment of this end, is dreadful beyond all endurance, both as it respects the character of God, and the condition of men. In such a case, instead of being directed by a steady and serviceable light, we must consider ourselves as abandoned to the illusions of an *ignis fatuus*, and reason should thenceforth be called infatuation.

If, however, the reverse of this impossible supposition be the fact, and if it is admitted that the judgments of human reason and the common sense of mankind, when properly exercised, are invariably right judgments, then it inevitably follows that religious truth will be in perfect accordance with them. For it is certain that whatever God has exhibited as

just and true, as wise and good, is actually so; and if the common sense of mankind is so fitted to the discernment and appreciation of these qualities as, when duly employed, to estimate them with accuracy wherever they appear, it is undeniable that the representations of God will universally accord with the considerate judgments of men.

While the agreement between religious truth and common sense is thus, as a fact, demonstrable from the character of divine communications and the constitution of the human mind, it is likewise in most entire harmony with the principles of the divine government, and altogether indispensable to its administration. As rational powers are given to man for the guidance of his conduct, so, in whatever instances his Maker wishes to direct him, it is to these powers that he appeals. He treats us, not "like the horse and the mule, whose mouth must be held in with a bit and a bridle," but like beings capable of apprehending and appreciating moral considerations. He tells us that such and such things are right, or wise, or beneficial; and he leaves representations of this kind to work their appropriate effect upon our minds. But this method is made perfectly nugatory, nay, it is absolutely stultified, if what is spoken to us do not accord with our natural sentiments. If the things represented as right and wise are repugnant, or even diverse, to our ideas of rectitude and wisdom, it is plain that such representations can have no tendency to call our sense of rectitude and wisdom into action, and that the whole intended effect in the case must consequently be lost. The agreement between our natural judgments and the topics presented to us, is the point in which their whole force as motives essentially lies. Destroy this, and you destroy the entire applicability of the motives employed, and render the use of them as absurd as the presentation of colours to the blind, or the uttering of sounds to the deaf. It is impossible to believe that the divine administration is of such a character. And as we know that religious truth is designed by our Maker to mould our character and influence our conduct, so we must maintain that it will be found to harmonize with those universal principles of human judgment to which alone its appeal can be made.

No indications that our all-wise Creator has proposed to influence the minds of men upon any other principle than

that of an appeal to reason and common sense can be gathered from his actual proceedings. He calls upon us most earnestly to hearken, to consider, to understand. He does every thing in his Word to bring reason into exercise. He appeals to the relations and the principles of ordinary life. For the settlement of the controversy which he maintains with transgressors he draws parallel cases from our own affairs, and says, "Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard." His grand plea in this controversy is that his demands are reasonable, and our own sense of reasonableness is the umpire to which he appeals for the decision of his claim. So convinced is he that common sense is on his side, that he submits his entire cause to its arbitration. The whole of revelation, indeed, is one continued appeal to human reason. Its language is, "Judge ye what I say. Consider and determine, whether these declarations do not so harmonize with known facts, and with your sense of righteousness and goodness, as to deserve your regard." The great excellency and the whole power of the Scriptures, as an instrument of moral discipline, lie in their being framed in such exact unison with the facts of our condition and the dictates of our reason that our judgment must approve them, however our hearts may dislike, or our passions resist them.

In making this assertion, the interposition and influence of the Holy Spirit is neither overlooked nor forgotten. It would be a very strange and unwarrantable view of the design of his work, however, if it were to be affirmed that, whereas God had made us with rational powers, he had sent his Spirit to supersede them. In truth, the whole aim of the Spirit's operation is to induce a right employment of our natural faculties. His office is to open the heart, that we may attend to the things which concern our peace; to give an effectual impulse to consideration; in a word, to engage the exercise of common sense on religious subjects—an effort from which men are otherwise withheld by passion and prejudice in a thousand forms. The work thus allotted to the divine Spirit is a vast and all-important one; and the condition that the whole system of divine truth shall in itself be fitted to the common sense of mankind, far from being out of keeping with it, is indispensable to the congruity and success of his operations.

To these observations in support of the position that religious truth will be found in harmony with human reason, we may add a brief reference to the painful and incredible consequences which must flow from an opposite sentiment. Let it, for the sake of argument, be supposed that the doctrines of religion do not accord with the common sense of mankind—that whatever truth or justice, goodness or wisdom, there may be in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is of a kind which the understanding of men is not fitted to discern and appreciate—and let us see to what it leads. It follows immediately that, in calling upon us to obey the Gospel, our Maker requires us to act, not *by* our rational powers, but without them, and even contrary to them; since to act under the influence of motives which we do not understand, is evidently contrary to the clearest dictates of common sense. We represent our Maker then as commanding reasonable creatures to act unreasonably. Is this possible? To have been created with rational powers is the peculiar distinction and glory of mankind, and to bring our rational powers into exercise is the tendency of all God's natural and providential arrangements. Can it then be supposed, that in our most important concerns he means to degrade us from the elevation he has given us; and that, although we are to make use of our understanding in every thing else, in reference to our highest capacity and our eternal destiny we are to act the part of irrational creatures? To imagine that he who gave men reason for their guide, should thus call upon them to act in violation of it, must be deemed, surely, nothing less than absurd.

Such a state of things would be the more unaccountable, because it would be altogether gratuitous. *Why* should our Maker summon us to an unreasonable action? Either there are intelligible reasons for what he commands, or there are not. If there are not, why should he require it at all? If there are, why should he not communicate them? It lay in his own bosom to determine both the extent of duty he would require of us, and the measure of capacity he would confer. Wherefore should he not have framed these related elements in a just correspondence? Why should he voluntarily have exposed himself to the perplexity, to use no stronger term, of attempting to govern rational creatures by motives which their powers were not adapted to comprehend?

Upon what equitable grounds, indeed, if it be so, can the Most Holy associate with the issue of his administration such fearful results? For it is to be remembered that obedience both to the law and the Gospel is required of us under an awful penalty. "The wages of sin is death." "He that believeth not shall be condemned;" nay, "he is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Thus, on the supposition now before us, a man is to be condemned eternally for not doing what it was unreasonable to do—for not yielding himself to impulses which common sense rebuked, and reason disapproved!

But this is not all. The attempt to produce conviction and persuasion against the common sense of mankind must be fruitless. The reason and common sense of men, though often sleeping and often perverted, operate, whenever they are duly exercised, with an inevitable and irresistible force. No power can make a man receive as true that which he does not perceive to be so, or allow that to be just and good which his natural judgment affirms to be unrighteous and unkind. The decisions of common sense, in one word, are absolute. You may lay it asleep; you may cause it to be disregarded; but, if it once act, you cannot resist it, and, if you set it against you, you have an unconquerable foe. Error and passion in all their forms owe their prevalence to the neglect of its dictates, and it is before its awakened and growing energy that they have begun to give way. In the common sense of mankind lie all the resources for the improvement and the happiness of the world; it is the universal criterion, the paramount judge, the all-controlling ruler; and were it credible that God should have set himself against this power of his own creation, even He could not prevail, otherwise than by the destruction of our nature itself. If religion has to contend, not only with the prejudices and passions, but with the reason and common sense of men, nothing can be expected for it but disappointment and defeat.

Or, if it be not so, let us be informed in what manner a religion is to prevail, the doctrines of which are at variance with the common sense of mankind. We shall be told, perhaps, that the reception of the Gospel is an exercise, not of reason, but of faith; that faith should advance where reason halts, and that faith can receive what reason would reject.

Now it is beyond question that the reception of the Gospel is an exercise of faith, a most excellent grace, into a depreciation of which I cannot consent that any of my observations should be interpreted; but it is surely a reasonable faith, or a faith for which a satisfactory reason exists, and can be assigned. If we are called upon to believe facts or testimony, it is only such as are shewn to be worthy of belief; or if we are required to acquiesce in any peculiar method of proceeding, it is not until the justice, wisdom, and excellency of it are demonstrated. But such a faith is an act of reason, and is plainly nothing more than reason itself in exercise on objects of a peculiar class and character. In this view, the action of faith and reason is that of allies, and not of antagonists; and it is passing strange that any considerate men should have adopted or sanctioned a contrary sentiment. Faith without reason must be an unreasonable, or, which is the same thing, an irrational faith; a kind of faith which it is dishonourable that religion should need, inconceivable that God should require, and impossible that any man of sane mind should perform.

When I affirm it to be impossible that any man of sane mind should exercise faith without reason, it may be replied, perhaps, that this is contrary to fact, since many persons actually do so. I look upon all such persons, however, as under a delusion. To try them by an example. They declare one moment, that it is unjust for a master to require of his servant labour which he is not able to perform; they affirm the next moment, that God requires of his creatures what they are not able to perform, and that, although he does so, he is righteous. The assertion that God in this case is righteous, is one of the things which cannot be reconciled to the common sense of mankind; and therefore they call in the aid of faith, and fancy that they believe what their reason contradicts. I conceive, however, that this is only fancy, and not faith. It is not in human nature to believe in the existence of any quality, unless we perceive an agreement with the sense and idea of that quality which exists in ourselves. The precise ground on which we proceed in applying such terms as wise, generous, or good, is that the things to which we apply them agree with our sense of wisdom, generosity, and goodness; and if any man were to begin to apply them on any other principle, it could indicate nothing

less than a derangement of his intellectual and rational powers. No sane man can, in the nature of things, believe a transaction to be just, which does not harmonize with his sense of justice; and as many profess to do so of whose general judiciousness there can be no doubt, I look upon them as the victims of an unperceived illusion. Evidences of it, indeed, may often be discerned by others, if not by themselves; as when they state that God's conduct must be just, though we cannot see it; or that our rules of justice must not be applied to him; or that he will make it appear just at last;—all which remarks evince the fact that they do not actually believe it to be just, and that they do not, therefore, exercise the faith they profess. Nor in any other case can it be done.

If I were asked whether an authenticated communication from God is not a sufficient reason for believing every thing contained in it, I might say in the first place, that, admitting this, faith would be no longer unreasonable, there being a good and sufficient reason for it. But I must add in the second, that the statement needs a limitation. An authentic communication from God is a sufficient reason for believing every thing contained in it, provided nothing be contained in it contrary to the common sense of mankind; since it is an axiom that, however what God reveals may transcend our knowledge, no communication from him will contradict it. I make no scruple in receiving the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation, which, though it cannot comprehend them, my reason does not contradict; but if it were to appear to me that God declared that to be just which, after a full and impartial consideration, I could not but deem unjust, I should conceive there was some mistake—as either that I had been imposed upon by fallacious evidence, or that I had not accurately received the idea intended to be conveyed. I conceive myself to be doing no dishonour to the Scriptures by this limitation, which is indeed absolutely necessary to their adaptation to the purpose for which they are designed, and perfectly in harmony with their construction and address.

Since, then, there neither is demanded, nor can exist, any faith but a reasonable one (whatever illusions may go under the name), it is plainly useless to look in this direction for help where reason fails. Whatever does not contradict the natural judgments of mankind reason will lead us to receive

if there be sufficient evidence of it, and will thus readily sanction our faith; but should any thing destitute of sufficient evidence, as things repugnant to common sense must always be, make its appeal to faith, we must inevitably answer, "I cannot believe without reason. Reason is my appointed and indispensable guide, and my adherence to her dictates is the only thing which distinguishes my condition from lunacy." It is necessary, therefore, to conclude, that if God has given to the system of religious truth any adaptation to its end, or any security for its triumph, it must be in perfect harmony with the universal natural judgments and common sense of mankind.

Let the principle I have been advocating now be tried, not merely by tracing the consequences of an opposite hypothesis, but by its actual bearing on the hearts and consciences of men. Every one knows that, among the methods by which unbelievers have either attacked Christianity, or justified their neglect of it, the denial of its reasonableness has been resorted to with peculiar frequency and effect. The leaders of the Unitarian controversy have conducted it avowedly on this ground, and have modestly denominated their system rational Christianity; and the same style of argument is employed largely by the whole school of infidelity. A similar species of opposition to divine truth may be traced in the humblest and most ordinary forms of irreligion. You find the lover of sin arguing that, since he can do nothing of himself, it is unreasonable to require any thing of him unless the Spirit is given; that it is equally unreasonable to call upon him to believe in Christ, when perhaps Christ did not die for him; and that, whatever his crimes may be, it is clearly unreasonable to keep him everlastingly in the fire as a punishment for them.

Without admitting that every thing which may have been deemed unreasonable is really so, it must be allowed, that, so far as any representation may appear to be unreasonable, its influence as a convincing or persuading power must be counteracted and diminished. It is not in the nature of things, therefore, that Christianity should be deemed unreasonable, without an obstruction being thus raised to its progress. And the actual state of the case amply confirms the expectation to which a knowledge of human nature leads. Among the causes which have hindered the prevalence of

religion, no one perhaps has been more influential than the fact, that what has been exhibited as religious truth has been repugnant to the common sense of mankind. It has been owing to this cause that infidelity has nursed itself in the very bosom of the Romish church, and has derived more strength from the monstrous errors and mummeries of her communion than from all other sources besides; it has been on this ground that secular religious establishments generally have supplied so many arrows to the enemy's quiver; and, for my own part, I feel no hesitation in ascribing the slow progress of real godliness in the midst of religious instruction to a similar cause. Speaking of course of instrumental causes only, I conceive that the degree to which the general scheme of religious truth, as now maintained by evangelical professors, appears to men at large to be unreasonable, is a principal occasion of the deep, and long, and seemingly impenetrable slumbers, of our privileged but perishing population.

The refutation of this class of objections to the Gospel is obviously of great moment, and few things can be more important than to ascertain the most efficient method of accomplishing it. Now it is perfectly clear, that the easiest and best mode of removing any objection, if it can be done, is to shew that it has no foundation in truth. So, when the doctrines of religion are complained of as unreasonable and contrary to common sense, no reply can be so satisfactory as to try them by this very test, and to demonstrate that they harmonize with those natural judgments by which they are said to be condemned. If this ground can be maintained, it is plainly of immense advantage in the strife with irreligion and infidelity. To have convinced a gainsayer that the representations you press upon him accord with the dictates of his own mind, is to have gained an attitude in which a direct and most effective blow may be aimed at his conscience and his heart.

Most fully am I convinced that this may be done. I believe that every part of religious truth is reasonable, and may be shewn to be so. I consent, without hesitation, to try Christianity by common sense; to abandon—not indeed what every caviller may object to, or what human reason cannot explain—but whatever can be shewn to be absurd, and to maintain only what accords with the universal judgment of mankind. It is with this view that some of the

principal doctrines of religion are taken up in the following Essays, and that an effort is made to demonstrate their harmony with the natural dictates of the mind.

It may be apprehended, perhaps, that, in such an attempt, I may have been exposed to the hazard of mutilating "the whole counsel of God," in order to bring it to an agreement with the views of depraved man. To this I only say, Let the Scriptures decide: they are the law and the testimony, and whatsoever accords not with them, let it be set down as error. While I frankly acknowledge that there are some views of religion which I should despair of ever reconciling to common sense, I must add that I think them equally abhorrent to the Word of God; and, on the other hand, the sentiments in which I conceive the universal sense of mankind will concur, appear to me to be in perfect unison with the inspired oracles. I beg it may be remembered, however, that my design has not been to invent a religious system which the reason of men may approve, but to shew that reason does in fact accord with what is divinely revealed.

Nor let it for a moment be supposed that I have aimed at harmonizing divine truth with the *feelings* of mankind. These are undoubtedly corrupt, and nothing that is holy could by any possibility be made agreeable to them. I have endeavoured to reconcile religion, not to the passions of men, but to their judgments. Now the judgment, although often perverted by the feelings, is not in itself corrupt. It is still fitted to perceive and appreciate truth, and ready to give an honest verdict. The endeavour to gain its concurrence, therefore, presents no temptation to pervert the truth, but an inducement rather to maintain it with the utmost strictness, inasmuch as truth is more fitted to gain the consent of the mind than error. It would be impossible to indulge in the liberty of modifying sentiments in order to gain the concurrence of an auditor, without an imminent risk of being detected, and the certainty, in that case, of being despised. The attitude I have assumed, therefore, in appealing to the common sense of mankind, is one that imposes upon me a pre-eminent carefulness that I deviate not a tittle from that holy Book according to which I profess to argue.

But let those who are not prepared to go along with me, say in what manner they would treat the same class of objectors against Christianity. Let it be supposed that we

are under the necessity of acknowledging, that at least some parts of what we enforce as religious truth are unreasonable, and cannot be made to harmonize with the common sense of mankind. We clearly give a fair occasion for the reply—"How then can you expect me to receive it? My rational powers were given to me by my Creator, in order that I might examine whatever should be presented to me, and adopt only what approved itself to my judgment. I cannot consent to lay the use of them aside. I can no more think of embracing sentiments which I regard as unreasonable, than of eating what I deem to be poison."

Remark the condition in which religion and its opponents are thus placed. We, as the friends of Christianity, are constrained to acknowledge that it is unreasonable, and that common sense is on the side of the sceptic and the infidel. What a melancholy and heart-breaking attitude! What an indelible dishonour, both to religion and its author! What a triumph for ungodliness and infidelity! Whoever might be content to remain in such a position, I must avow, for one, that I could not be so; and I profoundly rejoice in the conviction that I need not. Unspeakably delightful to me is the assurance that reason and faith are one, and that faith is only the just exercise of reason on divine truth; that common sense and religion are one, and that all the truths of religion will engage the universal consent of mankind, in exact proportion as common sense comes into exercise; that infidelity and irreligion are the most irrational things in the world, and without one grain of common sense to sanction them, or to withhold them from indignant rebuke and merited contempt.

I may be told, indeed, that, in the attempt to convince irreligious men of the reasonableness of religious truth, success cannot be calculated upon with certainty, since the most powerful obstructions to religion lie in the heart, which holds out long after the judgment is convinced.

But even in cases in which conversion does not result, a very important advantage will be gained. We shall no longer have the infidel exulting as though religion were madness, and he were the man of wisdom; we shall see him confessing that the folly is on his part, and common sense upon ours. We shall open upon him effectually the rebukes of his own mind, and lower to the dust the proud crest which infidelity has long worn.

Nor will this be all. Through the understanding is the way to the heart; and, so long as there is acknowledged any importance in the fitness of means to ends, it must be admitted that he who can most clearly convince is most likely effectually to persuade. It is not certain that a sinner whose views are rectified will be prevailed upon to turn to the Lord; but it is certain that, while he views religion as repugnant to common sense, he will not. One obstruction, and a fatal one, will thus be removed out of the way, and great facilities will be given to further endeavours. It is only, indeed, when we have arrived at this point, that we begin to bring religious truth into bearing at all; it is not until it gains the assent of the understanding that it has any chance of influencing the heart. Then, however, it begins to make itself felt; and knowing, as we do, that God has fitted his Word to its work, and pledged himself to its success, no fear need be entertained in its vigorous employment. Convinced as I am that one great cause of the stagnancy of religion is the alleged contrariety of its doctrines to human reason, I entertain an equally strong conviction, that the period when they are shewn to be in harmony with it will be the period for the triumph of Christianity. At the present moment religion does not carry with it the mind, the thinking portion, of this country or of Christendom. But it ought to do so; it is adapted to do so; and when rightly exhibited, it is my firm belief that it will do so.

Although I have thus strongly expressed my persuasion, that there is a system of religious doctrine which perfectly and equally harmonizes, both with divine revelation and the common sense of mankind, I beg to be by no means understood as affirming, though of course I believe, that my views compose this system. Every man, and especially every minister, should be concerned to ascertain it for himself. As to the following Essays, I have only to entreat the reader to make as beneficial a use of them as he may be able.

I may be permitted, perhaps, to commend this volume to the especial perusal and consideration of three classes of persons. First, to those who, through an inadequate exercise of reflection, or the want of suitable aid, have hitherto acquired no general view of the theory of religion, or of the entire scheme of Christian doctrine,—a class I fear very numerous, and more perhaps to be pitied than blamed; secondly, to

those who feel, and possibly have long and painfully felt, that in the sentiments they have been accustomed to hear and to entertain there are great and afflictive difficulties, which they know not how to remove; and thirdly, to those who have found the representations of religious truth so repugnant to their judgments as, in their opinion, to justify a practical neglect, or actually to induce a theoretical contempt of it.

To the last class of persons I would most affectionately say, (and I hope without being chargeable with egotism I may say it,) Take the trouble to ascertain whether the views of religion which this little book contains agree with common sense or not. If in your judgment they should not do so, you are then but where you were; but if they should, the results of this conclusion must be of the deepest interest. It will thenceforth appear possible to you that religion itself may agree with sound reason; since here is one representation of it which does so, and this *may be* true. Of what importance to you will it become to ascertain whether this representation is true or not! And, if it should be true, what an entire revolution in your ideas of religion must take place—what a total revolution *ought* to take place in your treatment of it too!

If you should be disposed to reckon the singularity of any of the opinions here advanced a presumptive argument against their truth, and to conclude that the general sentiments of the religious world are more likely to be right than the speculations of an obscure individual, consider the injustice and the hazard with which you do so. What we are speaking of is RELIGIOUS TRUTH, not the sentiments of religious teachers; not what is heard from the pulpit, but what is written in the Bible. There is no necessary agreement between these two. There is an unquestionable possibility that, not only a part, but the whole of public instruction may be, and may be to a great extent, out of harmony with the Oracles of God. I believe it is so; but without affirming this, the possibility of it should withhold every man who wishes to do justice either to religion or to his own soul to refrain from judging the Bible by the pulpit, or Christianity by its ministers. I am not careful to say—what, however, is true—that there are many who think with me, and that the sentiments I have advocated are becoming every day less

singular; I contend for the majesty and supremacy of Truth, which is doubtless exalted as far above myself as any other of her professed followers; and I protest against a mode of judgment, which would have sanctified the prevalent delusions of every age, and have consigned the world to a hopeless accumulation of errors. If what is here written appears to you to be reasonable, see immediately, and exclusively, if it is scriptural. Should it be so, you cannot hesitate, either as to your interest or your duty.

May God, to whose glory these pages are sincerely dedicated, and who, I trust, is working a beneficial, and by no means an inconsiderable change, in the long prevalent theology of this country, accept and bless this humble contribution to his service, for Christ's sake. Amen.

READING, *Sep.* 21, 1832.

THE

HARMONY OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

AND

HUMAN REASON.

ESSAY I.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

THE affirmed existence of God lies at the foundation of religion. If there be no God, as "the fool hath said in his heart," there can be no religion: and if there be, it is important that the proofs of his existence should be well established and understood.

In what manner an inquiry on this subject may best be prosecuted, of course every man may judge for himself; but, as we propose ultimately to survey the fabric of truth which men professing to be divinely inspired have built upon this fundamental notion, we may, perhaps, with great propriety, consult them also upon this point. We can renounce their guidance if we find it unsatisfactory.

Let us, therefore, hear the apostle, Rom. i. 20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." That is to say, the invisible attributes of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly discernible in the creation of the universe, being perceived by the things which are made.

Here it is affirmed that the attributes of God are things *invisible*. There is nothing in them, or in the divine nature

itself, which, like the forms and colours of matter, can become perceptible to the human eye. In accordance with this sentiment is the language of our Lord, "No man hath seen God at any time."

This has inconsiderately enough been brought sometimes as an objection against God's existence. "Where is God?" says the infidel; "shew him to us." It was never pretended that God could be seen; on the contrary, our instructor sets out with affirming that he is invisible. How far beneath what he is must he be if he could be seen! What? will the infidel have no God but one who, like the gods of the nations, has attributes which can be seen?—the size, the shape, the colour, which alone are perceived by the eye? Does he know nothing of the far higher qualities which are perceived by the mind, though the eye never saw them? Or will he pretend to believe in the existence of nothing but what he can see? When did he see the wind? When did he see power, generosity, or gratitude? Yet these things, invisible as they are, demonstrate their existence, it may be supposed, even to the conviction of an infidel.

It is maintained also, that the attributes of God, though invisible, are *clearly discernible:* that is to say, there is convincing proof of their existence. Such proof of the existence of unseen things is undoubtedly possible. Many things never seen by us may be believed on the testimony of others. Or causes may demonstrate themselves by their effects, and may be discovered and appreciated by them. Evidence of this kind is acted upon every day in the ordinary concerns of life, with the utmost confidence; as a familiar example of which we may take the wind, which no man ever saw, but which every man acknowledges in its effects, and which is perpetually turned in various ways to our own advantage. Evidence, therefore, may be afforded us of the existence of invisible things, and therefore of the existence of God as invisible. It is not a point on which we are necessarily left to conjecture, or even to doubt. There is a demonstration; the invisible attributes of God may be clearly discerned.

The apostle next explains the nature of the evidence afforded us on this point. God's invisible attributes are to be discerned "*in the creation of the world,*" and are demonstrated "*by the things which are made.*"

It is to be observed, therefore, that we are not called to

admit the existence of God *upon testimony*. No person says to us, "You may believe that God exists, for I can assure you of it." Without affirming that testimony might not have been sufficient, it is at all events much more satisfactory to be permitted immediately to judge for ourselves. And such is the judgment which, respecting the existence of God, we are called upon to form.

It should be observed, also, that, for proof of the existence of God, the apostle does not refer us to the Scriptures. Copious as is the instruction they contain respecting the Divine Being, it might be supposed that they would contain also the assertion of his existence. Upon examination, however, we find, that while they are every where telling us *what God is*, they no where assert that he is. This truth they take always for granted, and suppose it already proved. There is no reason to consider this as an omission or defect in the sacred volume; it is to be acknowledged, on the contrary, as an instance of the most perfect propriety. The Scriptures address us as *the Word of God*. "Thus saith the Lord," may be taken as a title to the whole of divine revelation; but, in order to give force or reasonableness to such an address, it is plainly necessary that the being who speaks should be previously known. If a letter should come to your hands, professing to be written by some being of a kind totally different from any hitherto known, you would certainly be justified in looking for some proof of his existence besides the letter itself. It would not satisfy you to find it asserted, ever so often or ever so vehemently, in that letter, that such a being as the professed writer described himself to be did exist, if this assertion was otherwise contrary to your knowledge, or unsupported by evidence: you would feel that it might be only pretence, and that you could in such a case have no security against imposition. Such might naturally and justly be the feelings of any man on having a professed communication from a being calling himself God, if there were no separate and independent evidence of the existence of God. "Thus saith the Lord"? we might exclaim: "who is the Lord? and how do I know that any Lord exists?" It is, therefore, with the most perfect propriety, and the most admirable wisdom, that God has no where in his Word asserted his own existence. Aware that, in order to speak with effect, he should be known before he speaks, he spreads

his works before us as a sufficient and complete demonstration of his existence, entirely apart from his Word. To vindicate his claim *to be* he leaves to the heavens which declare his glory, and to the firmament which sheweth forth his handy work; to the days which utter knowledge, and the nights which proclaim wisdom. The sun, when he goeth forth from his chamber, is a chosen messenger of the Deity to announce his being through all the earth, and to carry the tidings to the end of the world.

While this observation by no means depreciates the Scriptures, it attaches to the works of nature the highest value and importance. They are not to be regarded merely as affording practical illustrations of divine attributes elsewhere described; nor is it their whole value that they afford proofs, strong and independent proofs, of the existence of God: the fact is, that they afford the primary and entire proof of God's existence. This is the single method by which it has pleased him that this all-important truth should be established. How deeply interesting, therefore, the volume of nature becomes! And not less essential to our instruction than that of inspiration. Let us check that tendency to oversight and neglect which familiarity too easily breeds, by calling to remembrance that the various aspects of power and goodness which appear on every side of us are as the very features of our Maker's countenance, his image graven on his works, the lines in which are conveyed to us our first and fundamental lessons in his knowledge and his praise.

The arrangement which puts the entire evidence of God's existence upon direct rather than indirect proof, upon demonstration rather than upon testimony, is in many respects worthy of observation, and the more so when we consider the amplitude, the simplicity, and even the obviousness of the evidence employed. The works of nature are exhibited to every man in every age; to every man in every age, therefore, is exhibited the original evidence of God's existence, all that ever was adduced for the purpose of establishing it, and with as much freshness as though it had never been adduced before. Far from being an ancient truth resting upon evidence in itself remote, or by length of time rendered obscure, every man is permitted, and not permitted merely, but called upon, to judge of this question as though he were the first and the only man to whom it had been proposed.

And the evidence is not only fresh and complete for every man, it is competent to every man's examination. There is in the subject nothing recondite, nothing mysterious; nothing requiring the learning of the colleges, or the sagacity of the philosophers. It needs no more than the considerate exercise of an ordinary understanding, to learn the wisdom which day teaches unto day and night to night; or to argue that, as every house is builded by some man, so he that built all things is God. In this respect God has made ample provision for gratifying the mind of man. He condescends at once to conform the proofs of his existence to the humblest capacity, and to subject them to the scrutiny of the most penetrating; while, in a case which is equally interesting to all men, he treats all of them alike. It is the same evidence of his existence which he presents to the first and the last of men; namely, that which arises from "the things which are made."

Let us now proceed to examine the force of the evidence thus adduced. The existence of God, the apostle says, is proved *by the creation of the world;* or by the fact that the universe exists. That the universe does exist, of course every one will allow: but it may be asked, how is the existence of the world to prove the existence of any other being? Simply, because it is not conceivable that the universe could have existed without a cause. Now that cause which produced the universe is God. This is not the place for noticing the sophistical fallacy broached by some philosophers, so styled, that there is no causation, but that all we see is a mere succession of events, having no relation to each other; it will be enough on this occasion to adopt the common-sense maxim that nothing takes place without a cause. No house is erected without a builder: how then, without a builder, could there have arisen this magnificent universe?

Whoever resists this conclusion, that the existence of the universe indicates and establishes the existence of a being by whom it was made, is, at all events, bound to shew in what other method its existence can be accounted for. If it were a fact altogether involved in mystery, and one for which *no* reason could be assigned, then it might, and of necessity it must, remain unaccounted for. But this is not the case. On the contrary, we do bring forward a reason for the existence of the world, in itself most sufficient, and entirely harmo-

nizing with all acknowledged principles and methods of judgment, when we say that some being made it; why is this conclusion to be set aside? If there be objections against it, or a reason more probable, let them be assigned; if not, our argument is acknowledged to be valid even by its adversaries, and may be, and must be, maintained.

We can conceive of but four ways in which the existence of the world can by any possibility be accounted for. Either it existed always; or it came by chance; or it made itself; or it was made by some other being. Let us glance for a moment at these alternatives.

Did the world exist always? Did it exist from eternity? for that is the point. If it did not exist from eternity, there must have been a period when it came into existence, and then we shall have that fact to account for. It is scarcely to be supposed that any one imagines the world to have existed from eternity; but to shew that it could not have done so, I will adduce one argument, and one only. The world obviously presents to our view a constant succession of changes. The animals are born and die; the trees spring up and perish; the face of the earth is incessantly decaying and renewed; the rocks moulder into dust, and are reproduced beneath the ocean; the stars are in ceaseless motion; and nothing, in a word, is permanent. But a succession of any kind cannot be eternal. There must have been a first term in the series, and there may be a last; whereas eternity has neither beginning nor end. The world, therefore, cannot have existed from eternity. Whence came *the first* man, *the first* tree, *the first* summer?

Did the world come by chance? By chance? It would not be very reasonable to say that even a confused heap of stones came by chance; but to say it happened by chance that stones should be formed into walls, and the walls so placed as to form apartments, and the apartments so arranged as to afford all the comforts of a house, would be supremely impertinent and absurd. No man in his senses ever was guilty of such an absurdity as this. Wherever there is contrivance, we infer the existence of a contriver; and if this is the case in works of one class, it must be equally so in those of another. Look then at the marks of contrivance and adaptation every where apparent in the works of nature. See living creatures wanting food, and the whole earth providing

for their supply; see them needing activity and repose, and the day and night affording them seasons for both; see them with habits and impulses of almost endless diversity, and provision made for the gratification of them all. Examine the organization of the vegetable world, and see how its entire structure is adapted to derive nourishment from the earth, and to transform it into flowers and fruits, with their thousand nutritious or salutary products. Contemplate even your own body, and almost the simplest part of it, your hand, and observe its multitude of bones, with complicated strings, fitted alike to assume the straight line and the curve, to strike, to grasp, to impel; in a word, to do all that the hand of man can be required to do. Is there no wisdom in such arrangements? No goodness? And are wisdom and goodness attributes of chance! Impossible. Such a world did not *happen to be.*

Did the world make itself? The very question strikes one with astonishment, as involving an obvious impossibility. It is impossible to conceive of any thing making itself. We may conceive of a thing existing of itself, that is, without being made; but the notion of a thing making itself is one which absolutely cannot be formed by the human mind. To make any thing is an exercise of power, but no being can possess power while it does not exist; it is plain, therefore, that no being can exercise power before he exists. Yet, if any being were to make himself, he would exercise power before he existed; which is impossible. But if the supposition is thus inapplicable to *beings,* who have a power of action, how much more strange does it sound when referred to *things,* such as the solid earth, which have no power of action! O no: the world did not make itself.

Nothing remains, then, but that we come to the conclusion with which we began, namely, that the universe was made by some being. This plainly might have been; according to all our methods of judgment it must have been; and no other method of accounting for the fact exists. Now the being whose existence is thus indicated, be what he may in the further development of his character, this being is God.

While the apostle refers us to the works of nature for the entire evidence of God's being, he teaches us what amount of knowledge may thus be derived. We thus learn, not his existence merely, but some of "his invisible attributes;" namely, "*his eternal power and godhead.*"

The works which God has made clearly indicate his *power*. The making of any thing is obviously an exercise of power, and this attribute must unquestionably belong pre-eminently to the maker of all things. There is indeed something so peculiar in the act of *creation*, strictly speaking, as to attach the idea of power to God in a degree in which it pertains to no being besides. When *we* speak of making any thing, we mean only that we form it out of materials ready to our hands: a carpenter, for example, never thinks of *making timber*, however skilfully he may use it for the erection of a house. The maker of the universe, however, has *produced* his materials, as well as wrought them; and made all things out of nothing. Such an exercise of power is not fully conceivable by us; it is a kind of power of which we possess not even the smallest portion; yet it is plainly God's.

A consideration of the *magnitude* of God's works tends yet further to elevate our idea of his power. If, in the first instance, we look at this world alone, it is a vast object. Such a part of it as may be within our view at one time, contains wonders of animal, and vegetable, and mineral production, almost innumerable; yet this is but a mere speck to the whole earth. To say nothing of its huge bulk, its unfathomable waters, and its central abyss hitherto unpenetrated by even a plausible conjecture, its surface merely contains more objects of knowledge than have yet been even named by mankind, though multitudes have applied themselves to the task, and though the duration of the world is, perhaps, almost at an end. The earth, however, is but an atom in the universe. It is but a fragment of the system of worlds revolving round our own great luminary; while the solar system itself is a fragment still smaller of the entire series of celestial orbs. So far as the eye of man, with its utmost helps, can pierce into the ethereal vault, the whole region is filled with the monuments of creating power; and there is every reason to believe that similar products extend unmeasured leagues beyond.

Nor is power needed only to create, it is equally necessary to sustain what is created. When materials are merely put into a new form, they may remain in that form without the continued exercise of the force originally employed; but it is different when the very material itself is brought into existence. When we recollect that rocks, trees, and animals did

not come into being of themselves, it will appear plain that they cannot continue in being of themselves. A power of self-support it is as difficult to ascribe to them as a power of self-production. If the cause which produced them be the power of God, it would seem to be of necessity that the same power must sustain them. Every thing created still leans upon the creating arm; and were that energy to be withdrawn, all things would sink, and languish, and expire.

God's works are declared to establish his *eternity;* his *eternal* power. Eternity is duration without measure; and, therefore, without beginning and without end. When we say that God is eternal, we mean that he existed from everlasting, and that to everlasting he will exist. Now the apostle teaches us that this truth may be inferred from "the things which are made." The argument is this: God must have existed before the things which he made; but he made all things, and therefore he existed before all things. And if he existed before all things, there could be no power or being in existence by which he himself could have been made. He must have existed of himself. And if he existed of himself, he must have existed always, or from eternity; because it is absurd to imagine a being, as yet non-existent, to produce himself. Hence, therefore, the eternity of God is manifested by the creation of the world; and with his eternity the ideas of self-existence, self-support, and independence, are closely connected.

In the works of God we discern also his *supremacy:* his eternal power and *godhead.* It is not easy to trace satisfactorily the etymological origin and import of the word here rendered *godhead.* It seems, however, to denote superiority in the very highest degree, both of attributes and of rank; so that, according to the apostle, we may learn "from the things which are made," that the maker of them has the most excellent of all characters, and the most exalted of all stations. It is manifest, indeed, that in both he must be supreme. That he is first in *excellence* may be gathered from this, that he can have derived no ideas of excellence from any source but his own nature; and that, consequently, he can have produced no excellence in any being but such as existed in himself. No created being, however, possesses all excellences, or the largest possible measure of any one: they are scattered variously, and in various proportions, through-

out the created tribes; while in God, the universal Maker, all are concentrated and complete. That he is first in *station*, is equally evident from the fact, that all things are his works. Having formed all things, he can surely mould them; upholding all things by the word of his power, he can unquestionably control them. Things which borrow of him leave to be, must equally have his consent to act. He may justly be represented, therefore, as enthroned in the midst of his works, as wielding a universal sceptre, and maintaining an absolute dominion.

Such, then, is the evidence afforded to us of the existence of God, and such are the truths we learn respecting him from his works.

In bringing this argument to a conclusion, let us first observe how the question itself now stands. We have been asking whether God exists. Is it not marvellous that this should ever have been doubted? Whether God exists? Read it in your beating pulse, and in your throbbing heart. Read it in the springing grass, and in the ripening harvest. Read it in the fruitful earth, and in the raging sea. Read it in the howling tempest, and in the whispering breeze. Read it in the darkness of the night, and in the light of day. Read it in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars. Read it wherever a single beam of light falls on the earth, or glimmers in the sky; for the whole face of nature is but one ample volume to teach you this elementary but all-important lesson. Reader, if amidst these countless evidences you have doubts, tell me whence they spring. What fact militates against the conclusion? What argument? If none, then your doubts are clearly to be resolved into the unwelcomeness of the truth itself, and your unwillingness to realize the existence of a being whom you do not love.

But if it be a fact that God exists, a being possessed of "eternal power and godhead," suffer me to ask you whether it is not of importance that you should realize his presence. If God stood in no relation to us, still his being and attributes would afford subjects of most interesting inquiry; but, in the relation which he actually bears to us, this is saying far too little. As the author of our existence, it were strange and unnatural not to inquire after him. Will a child know he has a father, and cherish no wish to be acquainted with him? Or will a created being never say, "Where is God

my Maker?" As the author of our being, all the arrangements and events by which it may be affected are in his hands; he is a God "with whom we have to do," in affairs of present, future, and everlasting moment. Perhaps we owe something to him; perhaps we may expect something from him; perhaps there are modes of treatment adopted by him deeply concerning us: and shall we live in willing ignorance of him and of his ways? While there is a God, shall we allow ourselves to live as though there were none? That this is wisdom no man can allege. It can arise only from a desire to withdraw ourselves from an unpleasant consciousness. Yet, whether we think of him or not, he still exists, and still holds our destiny in his hands. What madness it is to disregard him!

Yet how, perhaps, the reader will ask, how is God to be realized by us? How, by a being so strongly impressed by the senses, and in a world by which the senses are so powerfully appealed to? We may realize God by reflection and consideration. The mind can discern things as well as the eye. It can discern God, and it will discern him in proportion to the intensity and frequency of our thoughts of him. Think much of God, and he will be consciously present with you. Withdraw yourself from the world of sensible objects into the solitude which God fills, and you will bring forth, in practical and habitual power, from the dreary region where they too commonly slumber, the notions of God's existence and character. If he lives in your recollection, you will live as in his sight; and though he may be to you still a God unseen, he will not be to you a God unknown.

It should be particularly observed, that the amount of knowledge thus derivable from the works of nature, is sufficient of itself to convey a knowledge of our duty, and to create a sense of its obligation. These are undoubtedly to be more vividly discerned by the light of God's Word; but we here assert that, by the light of nature, his works are sufficient for their discovery. I suppose, for example, reader, that you know nothing of God but his eternal power and godhead. You know then that he is the author of your being—your Father. Now, I ask you, whether this relation does not mark out your duty? Is it not something due from a child to a father? And what is it? Surely, a tender love and dutiful regard. Such, then, is plainly your duty to God.

You thus discover, likewise, not only the scope of your duty, but the source of its obligation; that is, you learn *why* you ought to love God. It is because he is your Father. And the sense of just and imperative obligation on this ground can never be got rid of, until a man of sane mind can feel it *right* to dishonour his parent. You may gather, lastly, that, as all your destinies are in your Maker's hand, whatever uncertainty may hang over his intended course, he *may* either recompense your dutiful regard, or make a painful retribution of your neglect. Should he be angry, it may be expected to be no trifle to bear his indignation.

Now these are the elements of moral knowledge, and are fully adapted to set in action our moral powers. We *ought* to act under the influence of these truths. We cannot neglect them without known peril and conscious wrong. To bring us thus far we do not want the Bible. The Bible takes up these principles, and founds its appeals upon them, but it neither creates nor reveals them; they arise out of our actual relation to our Maker, and are discernible by the very works which demonstrate his existence. We are entitled to ask, therefore, what infidels expect to gain by objecting to the Bible. For the sake of argument, let us put the Bible entirely aside: are our lips therefore silenced on matters of obligation and of duty? Unquestionably not. To every man we still say—All things declare there is a God; that God is your Maker; your Maker you are bound to love; and it is both criminal and perilous if you do not. Which of these assertions will an infidel call in question? Whichever it may be, we debate them with him on the ground of general argument, and make no appeal on this behalf to the Scriptures. We know, and every infidel knows, that they cannot be impugned; and that the force of them is to shut up every man to a conviction of criminality and ruin. We ask again, therefore, what do infidels expect to gain by objecting to the Bible? If they could thus get rid of the foundation and knowledge of duty, they might triumph in their supposed advantage. But this they cannot do. Should they destroy the Sacred Oracles entirely, the fundamental truths by which they are at once instructed and condemned remain unshaken. What the Scriptures contain of *peculiar* truth is pre-eminently the tidings of mercy and of hope; and this is all which, by rejecting them, the sceptic destroys. Madness of

infidelity!—to blot out the pardon, and to leave the condemnation and the crime!

Despisers of the Word of God, see where you stand! You reject the Scriptures. We consent that you should do so: and now we argue as though there was no Bible. You admit that you have a being, and that there is an author of your being—you have a parent. You ought to love your parent, but you have not loved him. You have set up your own desires, and pursued your own pleasure, leaving him unhonoured and unregarded. You are therefore wrong, and now unhappy, as well as in imminent danger of greater unhappiness to come. Are not these serious things? Are you content to brave the dark peril, and resolved to perpetuate the crime? Or does your conscience reprove you? Does your heart feel; and are you moved with some anxiety to inquire whether an alienated child may be restored to his father's bosom, and his unkindness be forgiven? Such questions are, indeed, of the utmost importance; but who can answer them? Neither you, nor I, nor sages of the ancient or the modern days; nor earth, nor sea, nor sun, nor stars. Brightly as all that is around us tells of "the eternal power and godhead" of the great Invisible, nothing instructs us in his purposes of mercy or of wrath. None of God's works furnish an answer to the questions, Is he so holy as to abhor and punish sin? Or is he so kind that he will forgive? What then will you do amidst this melancholy darkness? Take up the Bible? No: you allege it to be false, and on this pretence you have rejected it. "But, perhaps," you will reply, "*perhaps* it may be true; and if it be, what blessed tidings it will convey to my heart!" Remember, then, that it is not I who press the Bible upon you, but you who ask for it; that it is not I who need it for your conviction, but you who want it for your hope. It is indeed your hope; and if you will examine it as a condemned criminal does his reprieve, doubtless you will find its truth as demonstrable as its import is consolatory.

Finally: If the existence of God is demonstrated by the things that are made, a foundation is thus laid for whatever communications he may be pleased to afford. However peculiar his attributes may be, he is not a stranger, but a being already known to us. "His invisible attributes are clearly discerned." He is in a situation with respect to us,

therefore, in which he may speak without further introduction. If a communication is made to us with the annunciation, "Thus saith the Lord," we shall have no pretext for asking, "Who is the Lord?" We already know it: "he that made all things is God." The evidences of his existence every eye has seen; to him, therefore, every ear may reasonably be open: and let that which he speaks be estimated according to the excellency which, upon the most rigorous examination, it shall be found to possess.

ESSAY II.

THE NATURE AND CAPACITY OF MAN.

If the existence of God and his relation to us constitute the first among the elementary truths of religion, the nature and capacity of man undoubtedly constitute the second. If, when requirements are in question, it is necessary to an estimate of their justice to know him who makes them, it is no less necessary for the same purpose to know the being on whom they are made; since, as they may be proportionate to the glory of the Creator on the one hand, so they must correspond, on the other, to the capacities with which the creature is endowed.

Although it can scarcely be necessary to dwell upon so obvious a principle, it may be worthy of a moment's observation in the outset, because it has been sometimes, and, as I conceive, very strangely, overlooked. Persons who suppose that by the fall of our first parents mankind have lost their capacity of fulfilling the law of God, and who maintain that nevertheless the law continues unchanged in its demands and its obligation, are in the habit of vindicating this apparent inconsistency by saying, that, although man is changed, God is not; that he still bears the same relation to us, and has, therefore, the same right to command, whatever may have become of man's power to obey. I conceive this reasoning to be entirely fallacious. It seems obvious, that, when one party demands anything of another, the equity of the demand

must be judged of by the joint consideration of title on the one part, and of capacity on the other. It is the combined influence of these two terms which determines the amount of reasonable service. In order to know, therefore, what is righteously due from man to God, we have to ask, not merely what God is, but also what man is. His obligation corresponds with the extent of his capacity, as well as with the nature of his relation to his Maker; and if either of these elements should vary, the obligation must be affected accordingly.

I can scarcely conceive it necessary to adduce proof of so plain a proposition. In the nature of things, the right to command is clearly correlative and proportionate to the capacity to obey; since the employment of capacity in the way of obedience is the only thing to which the command can be intelligibly referred. If it were not so, but if, on the contrary, a right to command might be supposed to extend to beings not capable of obedience, then it might without inconsistency comprehend insane persons, and even the brute creation; a stretch of authority not so much unrighteous as absurd. Let it only be asked, for what reason God has limited his precepts to the human race, and has set up no claim of service from the beasts of the field. Can any answer be given to such a question but this—that they have no capacity to serve him? Why is an insane person exempt from obligation, but because his capacity for duty is destroyed? Or let us refer to matters of common life. What equitable master carries his requirements from a servant beyond his capacity for labour, or makes the same demand from him in sickness as in health—after the amputation of a limb as before it? Would any servant think himself justly treated in such a case? And would not every honourable mind sympathize with his indignation at the wrong?

In order to set aside the force of this reasoning, it has been said that the case is different when a man destroys his own power of doing what is required of him; then, it is alleged, his obligation remains though his power is gone. Now, to say nothing of the inapplicability of this illustration (for whatever we may have lost by the fall of our first parent, it is not *we* who have thrown it away), the principle of it is wholly untenable. Try it by a familiar example. Suppose that you have engaged a person to keep your accounts; and

that, by intemperate habits, he impairs his sight to such a degree as to incapacitate himself for writing. When you are informed that, on this account, he can no longer serve you, would you exclaim—"But he shall, for he has destroyed his own power for the performance of his duty, and I have still a right to his services"? Such a reply could be taken only as the language of insanity, or of passion. This may be illustrated further by an incident which is stated to have occurred in the late French war. We are told that, at a time when the conscription for the army under Napoleon was very rigorously enforced, a young man, in the presence of the *gens d'armes*, seized a hatchet and cut off his right hand, with a view to destroy his capacity for bearing arms. For that act he was clearly criminal; but even tyranny itself made no further attempt to enforce military service. According to some divines, it might have been said, "If your hand had been cut off by another person, we would have held you lawfully excused from holding a musket; but since you have cut it off yourself, we must still insist upon your doing so." The idea is too ludicrous to be entertained for a moment. No law can without absurdity be applied to persons actually incapable, through whatever cause, of complying with it. The mere *fact* that the conscript's capacity for service was lost, though it had been lost by his own criminal act, withdrew him from the law that required it. He might justly, perhaps, have been shot as a traitor; but he could not justly be called upon *then* to be a soldier.

I consider nothing to be more certain, therefore, than that the extent of our obligation must always vary with the extent of our actual capacity, by whatever cause it may have been either diminished or increased. Whatever the capacity of man is, such may be his duty, and no more.

It is not only as a measure of obligation, however, that the knowledge of man's capacity possesses a deep interest. More especial regard is due to it, because much ignorance, misunderstanding, and dispute have existed respecting it; together with what appear to be erroneous notions of extensive and injurious influence.

To proceed, therefore, we ask, What is man, in his nature and capacity as a creature of God? In this inquiry we do not mean to avail ourselves of the light of revelation; not, indeed, because, as in reference to the existence of God, it

contains no direct information on the subject, nor because we hold its instruction to be of little value, but because the true philosophy of the human mind ought to be, and we believe it is, deducible from its phenomena, as in any other department of natural science. The facts respecting our nature and capacity which belong to religion, we prefer establishing upon the ground of analysis and induction alone; that we may shew how firm the foundation of morals stands, without even asking the question whether God has or has not spoken to mankind.

We advert, in the first place, to the *nature* of man.

And here it is obvious to say that man consists in part of *a body* which we all see and feel, and by which we act. But the nature of man comprehends also a nobler part—a *spirit*. Some persons, disposed to cast doubt on this point, have thought it worthy of their acuteness to say, "Shew us the soul, we cannot *see* it." Such men, to be consistent, should close up all their avenues of knowledge but the eye. The heat, the light, the wind, are not seen. But they are *felt*, and so is the soul too, the existence of which, therefore, is as undeniably demonstrated. Many of our feelings, no doubt, can be referred to the body, as sensations of heat, or cold, or corporeal pain, cases in which the body is acted upon by causes suited to affect it; but whence are those feelings which arise without the influence of any corporeal cause? Why, when I see a beloved friend, do I feel a delight which I experience in seeing no other person? How comes it to pass that, when I think of the absent whom I love, my bosom throbs with anxiety? Why does the fact that my child is upon the sea cause the tempest which rocks my dwelling to raise my fears to still more violent agitation? Are these processes of the *body?* Can I have stronger evidence that "there is something within me, which can think and know, can rejoice and be sorry, which my body cannot do?"

There is, indeed, in the human frame a beautiful organization, to which some men have been strangely disposed to attribute the phenomena of mind; and it is still more strange to say that those who have most attentively studied it, I mean medical men, have, in a large proportion of instances, adopted this sentiment. Yet they have overlooked surely the obvious fact, that the entire and most admirable organization of the body constitutes it nothing but an instrument; and

that it still requires a living power to employ it. It is skilfully constructed mechanism; but what is a machine without the moving power—the steam engine, for example, without the steam? It is not in total ignorance of the structure of the body, that I affirm its anatomy to afford an argument utterly destructive of materialism; and that surgeons ought to be, of all men, the most fully convinced of the existence of the soul.

To the nature of man pertains likewise *rationality*. I refer now to the mode of human action. The process is this: the immediate forerunner of action is determination; our determinations accord with the prevalent state of our feelings; and our feelings correspond with the nature and force of our thoughts. Or, to invert our view of this process: we perceive objects, either by the senses or by reflection; the objects we perceive awaken feelings corresponding with their character; if any of the feelings thus produced acquire sufficient strength for the purpose, they induce determination; and that ultimately leads to action. What requires to be particularly observed is, that the objects we perceive do *infallibly* produce an effect upon our feelings corresponding with their own nature; that effect, however, being modified by the influence of other objects and feelings, and by the vividness, duration, and intentness of our perception of them. In the ordinary course of things, you never see a friend without pleasure, nor suffer an affliction without grief. If you are immersed in business, you become anxious; if you are always in pleasure, you become dissipated; if you are long in vexation, you become fretful. In a word, the object which occupies the mind, whatever it may be, moulds it to its own image. Not a thought crosses it, however swiftly, without some degree of influence; and its effect is increased in exact proportion to the warmth of its entertainment, and the length of its stay.

We turn, in the second place, to the *capacity* of man.

And on this head, we observe, first, that man has a capacity of *voluntary thought*. He cannot merely think upon objects which may happen to be presented to him, or so long as they may be so, but he can retain them at his pleasure; he can recall them at a distant period, when not suggested from without; he can withdraw his thoughts from any subject on which he chooses not to dwell; and he can select other and

different subjects for his fixed contemplation. This property there seems no reason to ascribe to the brute creation. That it is possessed by man every reader must have sufficient evidence within himself.

Secondly; man has a capacity of *self-government*, that is to say, of governing his feelings, which are the impelling causes of his actions. He is capable of modifying such feelings as may at any time exist within him, by making them either more or less powerful; he may even exterminate them altogether, and may produce others of an entirely different class.

To ascertain how this capacity is constituted, it is needful to be observant of two things which have just been stated. The one is, that man has a capacity of voluntary thought, and can select his own subjects of reflection; the other is, that every subject of reflection produces inevitably a corresponding effect. Out of these two facts a power of self-control obviously arises. For if a man can think of any subject with any intensity, and if every subject he thinks of is sure to produce an effect upon his mind according to its own nature and the attention which he fixes upon it, then it is clear that, by being enabled to select his thoughts, he is enabled also to regulate his feelings. This power of changing the feelings must plainly extend as far as the adaptation of the subjects considered to impress the mind extends; but, in truth, it goes in many cases much farther; because even unimportant subjects, by having much attention bestowed upon them, are known to acquire a very disproportionate influence,—an influence, that is to say, not proportionate to their own magnitude, but to the attention engaged by them.

For demonstration that a capacity of governing our feelings does exist in mankind, I refer with confidence to the evidence of facts, and to the consciousness of every individual. In numberless instances the feelings of men are actually changed. Every man is sometimes prompted to do things which he does not actually do. His feelings then are changed. Who changed them? It may be said they were changed by circumstances, and sometimes this may be the case; but it is far from being always so. For example: you find that you are become angry, and that it is necessary to be cool; you recollect yourself for a moment, or perhaps you retire for

a short period, and you regain your wonted tranquillity. You have made this change in your feelings yourself, and you did it on purpose. Again, you perceive yourself to have become too gay; your mind is even frivolous, and disinclined to business, and you feel the necessity of more serious application; a few minutes' reflection answers the end, and here also you change your own feelings. These, perhaps, may be said to be trifling instances; yet, if they are, they are as adequate to establish the principle I am maintaining as any other. However, to take a stronger case, let us notice one of the most powerful affections that can arise in the human heart; I mean the affection between the sexes. It is well known that attachments of great strength are sometimes formed only to be disappointed. It is well known, too, that, with whatever difficulty, even these overwhelming feelings can be overcome. Let the thoughts have a different direction given them, by avoidance of the exciting object, by application to business, by diversity of scenery, or especially by bending the mind to some new interest, and the whole heart is changed. This change is often effected by a person himself, who, knowing it must be done, intentionally sets about it, and perseveringly uses the means adapted to the end. In the face of such every-day facts as these, to say that man has no power of changing or governing his feelings, could scarcely indicate less than a wilful disregard of evidence.

The capacity of changing his feelings which we have now described, attaches a new and most important feature to man. It enables him to modify, and even to resist, the influence of the objects by which he may happen to be surrounded, and to maintain whatever state of mind he may resolve upon in defiance of them. Though necessarily much acted on by circumstances, he is thus rescued from being their victim. He may yield, but he may also resist; and, with sufficient motive and sufficient care, he may resist effectually. The sentiment that man is *absolutely* the victim of circumstances, and that he becomes inevitably what they tend to make him, is in great favour with men of the world, and is often unequivocally avowed; and if the constitution of the human mind contained no provision for controlling and altering the impressions which objects immediately present infallibly produce, I would confess it to be just. But the advocates of this notion clearly misinterpret the nature of man. It is

unquestionable that men often do change their feelings, and therefore that they have a capacity of doing so; and to the full extent of this capacity it is obvious that they may control the force of circumstances, and become the victors instead of the victims. If you are placed where anything tends to make you frivolous, having the power of selecting your own topics of reflection, you may bend your thoughts to subjects which will hold frivolity in check, and, in defiance of your position, render you serious. If you are situated in the midst of strong inducements to commit a theft, though you may feel them powerfully, you are not necessarily actuated by them; but, by suitable recollections duly entertained, you may still maintain your integrity. Nothing is more certain, indeed, than that men are not, in fact, the victims of circumstances with any thing like universality or uniformity. All of us are so in many cases; but there is no man, I apprehend, who has not conquered his circumstances sometimes, and what can be done once can be repeated.

The view of man which thus opens upon us is of the most momentous bearing. We here begin to see the scope which exists for voluntary effort in the regulation of our minds. The inferior tribes would appear to be in an absolute sense the creatures of their circumstances; and the state of their feelings, whether ruffled or tranquil, must be taken to represent exactly and inevitably the passing objects of their perception. Nothing would be more vain than to summon them to exercises of self-control. But with mankind it is far otherwise. Though we feel the force of circumstances, we are capable of modifying and controlling it. Our passions may be governed by ourselves. The practice of self-government, therefore, opens itself to our activity, and presents to us a wide field for interesting and industrious labour.

To man appertains, thirdly, a capacity of *moral perception*, or of perceiving moral truths. Moral truths are such as relate to matters of right and wrong, of good and evil. The very ideas intended by these terms it is utterly impossible to convey to the brute creation; but the mind of man receives them from early childhood, and they are to him among the simplest elements of knowledge. They come into the mind, also, with a peculiar force. They are very different from the ideas of pleasure and pain, of benefit and injury. We feel that what is agreeable or advantageous may or may not be

done, according to the inducements which may be offered; but we know that what is right *ought* to be done, and that which is wrong *ought not* to be done, whatever inducements may exist to the contrary. The idea of rectitude uniformly and inseparably brings with it a sentiment of obligation and supremacy.

Upon this class of sentiments the mind of man acts as it does upon all other objects of its perception. The understanding adopts them as the basis of a corresponding series of moral judgments, or opinions respecting things as right or wrong; and these judgments, not being in the first instance influenced by the feelings, are always faithful, according to the measure of knowledge possessed. This capacity and habit of forming moral judgments is familiarly called the conscience of man.

In like manner the feelings answer to these sentiments, in the same way as they do to sentiments or objects of any other kind. If an object seen to be pleasant tends to excite desire, one seen to be right equally tends to inspire approbation; if what is hateful in our eyes causes aversion, disapprobation is also awakened by what is discerned to be wrong. Approbation and disapprobation are the feelings which are appropriate to our perceptions of right and wrong; and they are as truly and certainly produced by such perceptions as any other feelings by their proper objects, and precisely according to the same laws. No man ever does, or ever can, perceive a thing to be right without approving it; or approve a thing which, at the same time, he knows to be wrong. He may love, or excuse, or attempt to justify, what he knows to be wrong; but that is a different affair. Neither can any man dwell strongly upon the rectitude or criminality of any object, without the appropriate feeling of approbation or disapprobation deriving proportionate strength.

To these remarks it must be added, that, among the feelings, approbation and disapprobation hold the same rank as ideas of right and wrong hold among the perceptions; that is, they are imperative and supreme. They are of greater power than all other feelings, and so are fitted to control all others, and to assert for themselves dominion. Some step may be very disagreeable to you, and if you were left to your pleasure you would never take it; but if you approve it as right, that feeling of approbation is so much more influential

than your feeling of aversion, that it leads you to do what otherwise you would not have chosen.

The effect of these things is to constitute man *a moral agent*, or to give him a capacity of moral action. He thus comes to act under the influence of moral sentiments, or, which is the same thing, under the perception of right or wrong in what he does. So far as he acts under the influence of such perceptions, he has a moral character, he is either right or wrong in performing them. Thus we all judge of ourselves and of each other. In a limited sense, which will be sufficiently understood for our present purpose, in doing what we perceive to be right we are right; in doing what we acknowledge to be wrong we are wrong.

It follows from hence that man becomes liable to praise and blame for his actions, according to the nature of them. Thus, in doing what he regards as right or wrong respectively, every man inevitably feels approbation or disapprobation of himself. On the same principle we invariably award praise or blame to others, and challenge or expect them ourselves. A man who is conscious of having acted up to his views of rectitude is confident of deserving the approbation of all honest men, and he receives it; he whom men blame is the man who knows what is right and does not pursue it, and he knows that he rïchly merits the censure which he bears.

From this train of observation it follows, lastly, that man is laid open to just requirements. Man being capable, by his faculty of voluntary thought, of producing any state of mind for which sufficient motives are presented to him, and uniformly attaching a sentiment of obligation to the perception of rectitude; if there is any being who can show to man that the production of a specific state of mind towards him, or the conduct flowing from it, is right, he may righteously require it. Of course it is necessary that any person who makes a demand should be able to show that what he demands is right, otherwise he exposes himself to merited neglect; but whoever can show me that he is requiring of me what it is right I should render to him, is plainly right in demanding it. To take a familiar example. If a person claims of me a sum of money, and can show no cause, I reject the claim as unrighteous. If he proves it to be a just debt, then I acknowledge it right that he should demand it, and that, according to the extent of my ability, I should discharge it.

If in these circumstances I do not meet the demand, I am justly and consciously liable to his censure, as a dishonest man.

It is upon this foundation that all just claims among men are established. A parent justly claims obedience from his children, because, by considering the relation between them and himself, they must perceive it is his due, and because by attention and care they are capable of rendering it. A master justly requires labour of a servant, because, from the relation of master and servant, he may know it to be his duty, and because he is capable of the labour required. It is the same with the supreme Parent and Ruler; he requires love from us because his relation to us demonstrates it to be right, and because he has endowed us with the capacity of rendering it. Resting upon such a ground, it is impossible to characterize the claim as unrighteous, or to pretend that, if it be refused, we are not liable to just disapprobation.

The sum of our observations is this: that man, in his essential properties as a creature of God, and without any other influence derived from his Maker than that by which all parts of a created and dependent universe subsist and act, is so constituted, that he is capable, within certain limits, of producing any assignable effect on his own mind; and that, within those limits, he may be justly required to produce such effects upon his own mind as correspond with the relations he bears. If these principles were admitted without dispute, I should proceed at once to deduce from them the propriety with which our Maker may call us into action, and demand of us the production and sustenance of a state of mind agreeing with our relations to him, that is to say—religion. But since these views are disputed, I may be expected, perhaps, to notice some of the objections brought against them.

We hear it said sometimes, that the operations of the human mind in natural and in spiritual things are not similar. It is admitted that the natural powers are equal to natural subjects; but divine subjects are alleged to have the peculiarity of producing no effect upon the mind by the use of the same powers, however vigorous. This it is certainly easy, and it may be also convenient, *to say;* but assertion is not proof, and carries no conviction. *Let it be shewn* that the things of God have any such peculiarity, what it is, and

how it operates. I do not know that this has ever been attempted; and the assertion, therefore, is sufficiently met by denial. But I will bring proof that divine truths do operate on the mind of man after the manner of all other objects, by appealing to the fact, that no man, righteous or wicked, ever applies his mind to them without experiencing a proportionate effect. Take a righteous man:—while he is musing "the fire burns," and every hour's meditation on heavenly objects quickens and inflames his love. Take a wicked man:—not a momentary remembrance of death and judgment flashes across his mind without producing an effect which it requires some effort of aversion or forgetfulness to efface; while, if such thoughts be under any circumstances rendered frequent or prolonged into reflection, their influence is undeniably manifest in the unquietness which invariably results. If thoughts of eternity produce no effect, why does a wicked man shun them? The very pains taken to avoid them is a proof, not merely that they have power, but that their power is so great that the sinner dare not encounter them.

We may be supposed in the preceding view to make no allowance for the effect of the fall. If the picture truly represent man in his innocence, it may be conceived that in his depravity and corruption such powers do not remain to him.

Now the effects of the fall have undoubtedly been great and melancholy. I conceive that therein perished the rectitude of man's nature, his chief excellency in his original state, and the greatest loss he could possibly sustain. This is abundantly stated in the Scriptures, and clear in fact. But this is widely different from any thing of which we have been speaking. We have inquired, not what is man's character, but what are his capacities. An alteration of rational constitution and moral capacity would have been a very material addition to the loss of his holiness; but I know of no scriptural indication of such a change. When we maintain man's constitution and capacity to be essentially the same as they were before the fall, we speak, as we believe, in entire harmony with the Sacred Oracles, and allow every thing to the fall which is ascribed to it by them.

In truth, the rational nature and moral capacity of man, like the members of his body, belong to him essentially and unalterably. Any change in these would make him cease to

be a man, and constitute him some new being of different attributes, and requiring a different administration. The effects of the fall alighted, not upon the capacity of man, but upon his propensities; and it is no more underrating these effects to say that he has now the same faculties of the mind, than it would be to affirm that he has the same members of the body. I may be reminded, perhaps, of some scriptural expressions as inconsistent with the doctrine of this essay. Men are said to be blind, deaf, and even dead; nay, it is affirmed, that they *cannot* produce holy dispositions without divine influence. No person can suppose that I am ignorant of this language. I consider the whole of it as intended to indicate, not the presence or absence of any faculties, not the greater or smaller measure of capacity, but the manner in which existing faculties and capacities are exercised. They refer to the prevailing state of feeling, and the action of the various mental powers under its influence. They are metaphors, therefore; terms not to be understood literally, but to be interpreted according to a just analogy. *Death* is a figure denoting the total absence of right feeling towards God. *Blindness* represents a sinner's hatred to divine knowledge. *Deafness* is his unwillingness to consider. *Cannot* is a term denoting strong determination, and obviously means *will not*, as it is frequently explained in the Scriptures themselves. If this be not a proper view of these passages, I am open to instruction; if it be, I may presume that they, and all such, are satisfactorily explained, without any inconsistency with the preceding statements.

I may be asked, whether the foregoing views do not tend to supersede the office and work of the Holy Spirit;—a most afflicting tendency, truly, and decisively condemnatory of any sentiments in which it really existed. But, perhaps, I may be excused for asking in return, and with some surprise, whether the office of the Holy Spirit is anywhere stated to be that of giving us *capacities?* The Scripture speaks of our being made willing; of the heart being opened to attend to the things spoken; of our being brought to receive the love of the truth; for which, opening the blind eyes, giving an understanding, giving a new heart, quickening the dead, and similar phrases are the appropriate metaphors. If it can be shewn according to the Scriptures that the office of the Spirit is to give us capacities, I shall be bound to acknowledge

the force of the evidence; but if it cannot (and I apprehend it never can be done, and only by a very few would it be attempted,) then there is plainly no force in the objection brought against me. I have said nothing but of man's capacity; and if it is not the work of the Spirit to alter this, it is impossible I can have interfered with his province.

Should it seem that, if man is in possession of such excellent capacities, there is no apparent ground for the interposition of the Holy Spirit, I need only recall the melancholy, but, it would seem, forgotten fact, that with excellent capacities he unites a bad disposition. Man idolizes himself, and therefore hates God, who claims to be his ruler; he yields himself to his passions, and abhors restraint. Hence arises the occasion for that gracious influence which the blessed Spirit is appointed to exercise, to check this desperate career of sin, to give an incipient impulse to a wiser course, and by his own immediate and almighty power to form the elements of a character entirely new. My acknowledgment of the necessity of the Spirit's work on this ground is deep and solemn; and I conceive that herein I render him all the honour he demands. If there are any persons who think that the mere removal of a reigning evil disposition is not an object requiring such a glorious interposition, I can only say that their views of human depravity are much slighter than those which the Oracles of God appear to me to contain, and the history of mankind to establish.

It may be said, lastly, that, if a man is so desperately unwilling to cultivate rectitude, it is the same thing as though he was unable. I beg nothing but that this argument may be tried by its application to matters of common life. If you had a debtor, for example, who, being very well able to pay you, was at the same time so determined a sharper that he used every method to evade payment, and could be thoroughly relied upon to do so to the last, would you quietly turn from him, without pursuing measures for the recovery of the debt, or without even blaming him for his dishonesty, because it was the same thing as though he was not able? And upon what ground is a mode of argument introduced into religious questions, which would require a man to be insane before he could either adopt or understand it in temporal affairs? If a man can but will not it is *not the same* as if he really cannot. Such is the dictate of

every man's common sense now, and will be the principle of the universal Judge at last.

In making an application of the principles now laid down, I feel it needful, in the first place, to ask my reader whether he is convinced that the view I have given of the nature and capacity of man is true? If he is not, all I have to say is that the subject calls for his immediate and most serious consideration. For my own part, I cannot attempt to bring home a sense of obligation to any man upon any other ground. It is for you to examine, dear reader, what your idea of the ground of moral obligation is, and whether it is one out of which any rational or intelligible sense of obligation can arise. The very foundation of duty and religion lies here, and a mistake may be speedily and everlastingly ruinous.

If, on the other hand, you do acknowledge that the constitution and capacity I have described are yours, then, to use the freedom of a personal address, I beg you to observe how righteously you are called by your Maker into action, and into action fully corresponding with the whole import of his law. You are capable of producing and cherishing supreme love to him, if he shews you sufficient cause. Does he shew you sufficient cause, in the relation which you hold to him as the author of your being? If he does, you are bound to fulfil his demand. You cannot refuse to do so without knowing that you are wrong, and that you deserve his disapprobation. Up, therefore, instantly, and be doing. Show a due activity in the discipline of your heart. Give the intent, the continued, the habitual consideration to your Maker's claims which is due to them. The appropriate result will follow. God has connected the use of the means with the attainment of the end. Every half hour you spend in the contemplation of him will diminish your indifference, and tend to awaken your love.

Upon the supposition that you are already guilty, that you have hardened your heart against him, and that you deserve his wrath, his voice of mercy may with equal justice call you into action. He is willing to forgive; but you must change the criminal state of your mind. "Be ye reconciled to God." "Repent, and be converted;" or, in plainer language, Change your mind, and turn to God. "Make you a new heart." If these should be his demands, and if there should be shewn to

you sufficient reasons for such changes in your state of mind, you are capable of producing them. Are there, then, sufficient reasons why you should be reconciled to your Maker? You know there are. You are, therefore, under just obligation to fulfil these requirements; and if you do not, you will be consciously acting against reasons which you acknowledge ought to prevail with you. Again I say, therefore, up and be doing. What is the meaning, or what even the pretext, of your delay?

You cannot now say that the demands made upon you are either in their nature unjust, or unreasonable in their extent. You have admitted the argument by which I have been endeavouring to show you that you are capable of fulfilling them, and you do not pretend that they exceed what is due to God in the relation you bear to him. Your only reason, therefore, for not applying yourself to the regulation of your mind according to his will, is that you dislike the object, and so refuse the effort. You prefer that your mind should be in another state, a state, namely, of self-indulgence and love of the world; and for this cause alone you will use no means to turn it to God. What can this be called? Is it not wicked? Is it not desperately wicked? It is unquestionably what you yourself cannot approve, and what you know your Maker must condemn.

If you attempt to fly from conviction by saying that you do wish to be right, and that you do use means, and do what you can, I can only marvel at the facility with which you practise a fraud upon yourself. *You do what you can?* Tell me, then, what it is that you have done. You read the Bible; you hear sermons; you pray. But what of all this? Do you ever *think?* Tell me how often you retire to meditate. What portion of time is occupied every day with earnest reflection on the things of God? When and with how much care did you take up the truths of his Holy Word, and endeavour to bring them home to your heart by keeping them for a longer space before your view? With what perseverance have you carried on a contest with your reigning passions, as though you were in earnest to overcome?

These are questions which you cannot satisfactorily answer. You may have done every thing but apply yourself to consideration; but, in neglecting this, you have neglected the only means at all conducive to the end. You have neg-

lected it because you disliked and dreaded it. You felt it had power, and therefore, bent upon sparing your iniquities, you have evaded the use of the weapon which would infallibly have slain them. Do you mean to perpetuate this criminal folly? Do you mean, in such an attitude, to await the summons and the award of your Judge? At all events you are convinced, even now, that he will be righteous in your condemnation. You perceive already that you can never bring against him the charge that he is a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed; you are prepared to acknowledge the justice, as well as to feel the weight, of the condemnation to which you hasten,—"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

ESSAY III.

DIVINE REVELATION.

As religion relates to the duty of man towards God and the expectation of man from him, so, in directing your attention to the elementary truths of religion, we have treated in the first place of the existence and character of God, and in the second of the nature and capacity of man, as both may be deduced from the objects and operations which are open to our observation. From what we have learned on these subjects, we derive two simple, but highly important conclusions: first, that a specific regard is due to God, the Creator of all things, from every creature capable of rendering it; and, secondly, that, as man is capable of rendering such regard, it is justly required from *him*.

We have deemed it important to show, that the foundations of moral and religious truth are laid in nature, and that they are clearly discernible by its light; but we do not profess to proceed further in the construction of the edifice without more competent aid. Whatever other truths besides those we have noticed might be deduced, or guessed at, by the reasoning of men, they could possess, in such a form,

neither authority nor certainty; and it would be folly, therefore, not now to take advantage of superior instruction, if any such is presented to us. It so happens that there is a volume professing to contain communications from God himself, upon the very subject of our religious duty and welfare. We are told that God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and that, in these last days, he hath spoken unto us by his Son, to whom may now be added the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. Now if this is a fact, it is invaluable. Instruction from such a source may be received with the utmost confidence; and while perplexities and uncertainty will vanish amidst its luminousness, unbelief and contradiction must submit to its authority. Unassisted, our path henceforward is one of darkness and of peril; and it would be madness not to avail ourselves of the lamp of divine revelation, if such an aid is really accessible, at the earliest possible stage of our progress.

When a man professes to speak in the name of God, however, and affirms of his words, that "Thus saith the Lord," he makes a pretension of a magnificent, and even of an awful character. It *may be* the language of a person bent on deluding us, or of one himself deluded; and the issue dependent on the admission of his claim is too fearful to allow the slightest hazard of imposition to be incurred. Every man, therefore, is both entitled and required to institute a rigorous inquiry into inspired pretensions, by whomsoever they are made. Those who wish revelation to be true should not satisfy themselves without it, and those who suspect or wish it to be false cannot be complained of for the utmost severity of honest investigation.

Attempts have been made to undermine divine revelation, by representing as either impossible, incredible, or unnecessary, any direct communication from God whatever. Let us briefly inquire into the justice of these insinuations.

We ask, then, whether a moment's consideration will not show communication from God to be *necessary* to any extensive knowledge of religious truth.

Look at the condition even of Adam in his innocence, and think what he could have known by the mere exercise of his natural faculties. By the things which were made he might have clearly seen his Maker's eternal power and godhead,

and hence might have deduced his obligation to revere and honour him. He might have inferred, too, that the cultivation of such a temper would be acceptable to his Maker, and that the contrary would incur, as he must know it would deserve, his displeasure. But, unless otherwise informed, what could he know more of his Maker's character, of the specific duties required of him, of the privileges he might hope to enjoy, of the perils he might have to avoid, or of the ultimate destiny of his being? It seems clear that, whatever he might conjecture, he could *know* absolutely nothing on these points; and in this case, if he had been left without revelation, he would have been left in complete darkness respecting the matters most deeply interesting to him, and those by which alone the moral capabilities of his being could be adequately called into action.

If such an observation applies with justice to our first parents in their innocence, with how much more force must it be applicable to them and to their posterity since the fall! The condition of mankind now is complicated by the fact of transgression; and if innocent man might have learned all his duties, and perils, and privileges, without revelation, how, without such aid, is fallen man to know whether sin may be forgiven, or in what method the conscience may be freed from guilt, and the heart cleansed from iniquity? Although upon this vital subject information was from the first most graciously communicated, it was so neglected by the willing ignorance of men, or so perverted by their sensuality and their vices, that all nations fell into utter darkness; so that, for several ages, a particular nation, the Jews, were selected as the depository of existing truth, until the fulness of the times should arrive, and God's own Son should bring life and immortality to light. Is it not evident from these things, that, if there were no revelation, there could be no religion; and that the moral capabilities of man would have been bestowed in vain, if his Maker had not imparted the knowledge by which alone they can be brought into action?

And why, in the next place, should a revelation from God be deemed *incredible?* Why should it be thought even strange? We ask, on the contrary, what can be more natural? We ask whether it is credible that the Most High should form a creature capable of holding intercourse with himself, and yet establish no communication with him? It

is not the habit of the Almighty to confer powers which he does not exercise, nor to leave the capacities of his creatures unemployed, or their wants overlooked. Yet all this would be done, if man were left without the revelation of moral and religious truth. Man is capable of receiving such communications, and they are needful to bring his moral powers into action, to develop the principal excellency of his nature, and to open the highest sources of his happiness. Is it credible, that in such circumstances revelation should be withheld? What thoughts must we have of God, if we conceive that he has created and multiplied such beings, not to link them closely with himself, but to cast off and abandon them; not to exercise their faculties, but to consign them to indolence and decay? We affirm, on the contrary, that, from the very nature and condition of the human race, it might be convincingly argued, that a system of direct communication from himself formed a part of God's natural and primary arrangements respecting his creature, man.

To deem a revelation, finally, *impossible*, is certainly to venture on a somewhat presumptuous limitation of divine power. To what an amazing knowledge of celestial secrets must he pretend, who can venture to affirm that God *cannot* communicate with man! Who gave any man information of so marvellous a fact? This itself would be a revelation, and yet it is used as an argument to prove that revelation cannot exist. But the notion is palpably absurd. What, indeed, can be more absurd, than to suppose that God can create, but that he cannot hold communication with the creature he has made; that he can confer powers, but that he cannot bring them into action; that he can form language, but that he cannot utter his own thoughts; that he can make creatures to communicate with each other, but that he can bring none of them into communication with himself? What reasonable question can be entertained, that, if he see good, the Almighty can impart knowledge to man, either by a voice, with or without the assumption of a human or any other form, or by direct intercourse of mind with mind, in waking or in sleeping hours?

With respect to a revelation from God generally considered, therefore, we regard it as neither impossible, nor improbable, nor unnecessary. We have now to turn more particularly to

those records in which an actual revelation is professedly contained. These are the Sacred Scriptures. Let it be observed, however, that, when we speak of them as containing a revelation from God, we do not speak of the whole of their contents. Their historical narratives, for example, although written under divine guidance, are not matters of revelation. We do not now touch upon the argument for the general inspiration of the Scriptures, but confine ourselves to those truths which claim to be strictly revealed, or communicated directly from God. Both prophets and apostles, and, superior to them all, the Son of God himself, have professed to speak in the name of the Lord, and by his authority; and to what they have uttered they have unscrupulously attached the magnificent appendage, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The question we now entertain is, Were they worthy of credit in setting up such a pretension?

To this question we answer, first, that no ground whatever exists for a suspicion of imposture. It is a case, no doubt, in which imposition is possible, and it has indeed often been attempted. But all frauds tend to their own detection. No man endeavours to practise imposition but for some secret end; and if the perception of such a purpose justifies suspicion, its absence challenges belief. Hence, in common life, if a man makes a representation which tends to his own interest, it is received with caution; but, if otherwise, it is promptly regarded as true: for why, we naturally ask, should he utter a falsehood by which he is to get nothing? Let those who have claimed inspiration be judged by this rule. Which of the sacred writers made it subservient to their own interest, or to any other object besides that which they avowed? The word of the Lord was invariably a "burden," in the delivery of which both prophets and apostles encountered the prejudices and passions of men, renounced every prospect of advancement, and exposed themselves to obloquy and hatred, to persecution and to death. If they were practising an imposition, is it not passing strange that such a series of calamities as was encountered by Jeremiah, by Paul, and by the Lord Jesus, did not weary them of their bootless fraud, and induce them to relinquish that which was the only source of their sufferings? If they were impostors, they must have been unprincipled men; but unprincipled men are universally found ready to give up even truth and

honour for their advantage: what, therefore, could possess these, that, at the loudest call of worldly interest, they would not abandon a falsehood and a fraud? In these circumstances, it is surely much more difficult to believe them false, than to believe them true.

But, if they did not practise an imposition, they might have been themselves deceived. They might have been so: let us see, therefore, whether professedly inspired men did not give substantial evidence that their claim was founded in fact.

To present this subject in the most familiar form, let me request you, reader, to suppose that a person presents himself to you with an alleged message from God, and that you are requiring of him the evidence that his allegation is true. What evidence would you think suitable and sufficient for the purpose? His affirmation would not suffice; for, though you may not suspect his honesty, you might conceive him mistaken. You would feel nothing so satisfactory, perhaps, as to ask, "Has God given you the power of performing any extraordinary work, in such a manner that I may clearly see it, and fully examine it? Can you heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, or raise the dead? If you can do these things without a juggle, I may then, and indeed must, believe that God has sent you." This was the manner in which people argued of old. When Christ set up his pretensions to come from God, his hearers said to him, "What sign showest thou? What dost thou work, that we may see and believe thee?" And it is undoubtedly both proper and sufficient.

Now this is one of the very principles on which the scriptural claimants of a divine commission found their appeal. It was so with Moses, when, on his appearance before his captive brethren and their Egyptian oppressor, he was bidden to change his rod into a serpent. It was so with Christ, when his beneficent miracles filled the whole land of Israel with his name. "The works that I do," said he, "bear witness of me. Believe me for the very works' sake." It was so with Paul, when Elymas sought to turn away the Roman deputy from the faith, and was indignantly rebuked by the infliction of blindness. The force of this argument was readily admitted on all hands, and was never questioned, even by the bitterest enemies of Christianity. "We know

that thou art a teacher come from God," said Nicodemus, "because no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." The case of the man born blind, recorded in the ninth chapter of John's gospel, shows at once how severe a scrutiny the miraculous cures wrought by our Lord had to undergo, and how excessively anxious the Pharisees were to get rid of the argument resulting from them. When they said to the man who had been healed, "What sayest thou of him because he hath opened thine eyes?" he replied, "He is a prophet." When they threw suspicion upon Christ's character under the pretence that he had broken the Sabbath, the man repeated the same argument;—"Whether he be a sinner or no I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." And when, irritated by the force of an argument which they could not evade, they reviled both him and the Lord, saying, "As for this fellow, we know not whence he is," they were met by the same irresistible answer: "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God he could do nothing." Such is the decisive nature and overwhelming force of the argument derived from the working of miracles in support of a claim to divine inspiration. It is God lending his own power to man, in order to demonstrate that man speaks in his name. Now the fact is familiar to you, that many of the persons who, in the Scriptures, profess to speak in the name of the Lord, did also work miracles, and miracles upon the reality and fairness of which no imputation whatever has been effectually cast, from the time when they were wrought to the present hour. They, therefore, fully establish their claim.

But perhaps you might wish to try a claim to inspiration by an additional test. To a person who should make such a pretension you might say, "If you have communication with the Deity, you can probably reveal secrets, or foretell events to come. For God knows all things, and he only; and if you are so gifted, that will constrain my belief that you speak in his name." This is an idea that has been entertained and acted upon in all ages; it was, indeed, the foundation of the ancient system of divination. The fact of communication

with God on behalf both of Joseph and of Daniel, was admitted when the former interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, and the latter those of Nebuchadnezzar. This also was the principle of the appeal, when the soldiers tauntingly said to the Lord Jesus whom they had blindfolded, "Prophesy, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" And unquestionably there is conclusive reason to admit that a person who can foretell future events is of God, since the prerogative of knowing them belongs to him alone. He thus claims it as his own: "Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. . . . Have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses."

This kind of evidence of their inspiration is amply afforded by those who in the Scriptures set up a claim to it. Prophecy is even more common than the working of miracles. Many persons by whom it does not appear that any miracle was wrought, predicted coming events; and those who exercised miraculous powers generally, if not uniformly, added the testimony of prophetic inspiration. Enoch, Moses, David, and the prophets, are united with our Lord, his apostles, and others of his disciples, in affording this demonstration.

If it should be imagined that predictions may be framed with sufficient ambiguity to admit of an alleged fulfilment in any case, such an idea would show an entire ignorance of the character of scriptural prophecy. Many of its annunciations are to the last degree minute and explicit. An example may be taken from Isaiah xlv. 1: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings, and will open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut." Besides the calling of an unborn conqueror by name, the manner of his entering the city of Babylon is here most exactly foretold. Having diverted the Euphrates from its channel, Cyrus entered the city by the bed of the river; and found "the two-leaved gates," by which all the avenues from the river were defended, *not shut*, forgotten, doubtless, in the general intoxication of a royal feast. The description given by Daniel (chap. viii.) of the conquest of Jerusalem and the pollution of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, was so literally accomplished that

Porphyry, one of the shrewdest and most learned adversaries of Christianity in the early ages, could find no way of evading the argument derived from it but by insinuating, though without the least foundation, that it was written after the event.

If it be said that, in order to judge of a prophecy, it requires time to see whether it will be fulfilled; this will lead us to an observation which distinguishes sacred prophecy from every rival, and renders it pre-eminently convincing. The predictions of Holy Scripture have been so formed as to comprehend events at all distances of time. Some have been of almost immediate occurrence; as when Isaiah prophesied that within three years the kings of Israel and Syria, who were besieging Judah, should be destroyed. Some have been of greater remoteness; as when Daniel foretold that in seventy weeks, or 490 years, the Messiah should be cut off. Some, again, have been much more distant, and approximated to the end of time. This looks not at all like fraud. The effect of it has been, in the first place, that the very persons to whom the alleged prophets have spoken have had an opportunity of putting their veracity to the test; and, in the next place, that successive generations have been enabled to do the same. No man can live at a period the leading events of which are not depicted on the page of prophecy; every man, therefore, is qualified to bring the prophets to a fair and decisive trial, by observing whether the predictions which refer to the age in which he lives receive their accomplishment or not; and whatever mystery may attach to the minute interpretation of prophecy, the general scheme of it is sufficiently plain for this purpose.

So far as the criticism of scriptural prophecy relates to past ages, the result has been most satisfactory. Within three years, Rezin and Remaliah were destroyed; at the end of 490 years the Messiah was cut off; and all the grand outlines of prophetic vision have gradually been transcribed by the pen of history. No past era records the errors of the ancient seers. And what is the testimony of the present? It is in perfect accordance with the past. Look at the Jews, and observe how accurately their present state fulfils the words of Moses: "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and among these nations shalt thou have no ease,

neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee." Deut. xxviii. 64–66. Look at the Mahometan empire, distinctly marked in its origin, nor less so in its decay, while before our eyes the waters of the Euphrates are being dried up. Look at the man of sin, and the scarlet-coloured whore, so long drunken with the blood of the saints, and the judgments plainly impending on the kings who have given their strength and power to the beast. These are evidences *to us* that the prophecies, which are thus accomplishing in our presence, were uttered by inspiration from God, and that those who delivered them, when they claimed to be inspired, were neither deceivers nor deceived. They are *present* evidences; evidences altogether new and fresh, which our fathers had not, but which are brought forth by the current age, to meet our eyes, and to engage our faith; and they are of the greater power, because they are a part of an immense mass of evidence which has been accumulating for ages; and because, by the series of fulfilled prophecies to which they belong, they link us by an unbroken chain with earlier periods, and lead us back to the very times when predictions were delivered, and miracles were wrought. The whole amount of evidence of both kinds is thus blended and consolidated into one mass of convincing proof; and I fearlessly ask any man of common understanding and fairness who will apply his mind to the subject, whether it is not adapted and sufficient to prove that God hath spoken to man. If he has not, how came these persons to be able to work miracles, and to foretell future events? If infidels cannot answer this question (and they never yet have done it), in rejecting the claim of these men to inspiration they stand convicted of irrational obstinacy.

To this direct and substantial evidence it may be added, that the matter communicated in the Scriptures is worthy of its alleged author. If it were found that men who professed to have a communication from God made known, after all, only things unimportant in themselves, or such as might be otherwise acquired, this might throw a suspicion on their credentials. But it is our happiness to know that the contents of the Bible are of a totally opposite character. The topics which are dwelt upon by Moses and the prophets,

by Christ and the apostles, are of the highest moment; they comprehend the duty, the condition, the prospects, and the welfare of man; and the discoveries which are made on these subjects are the most extraordinary, important, and satisfactory, which can be imagined. Here are truths which, if God had not revealed them, no creature ever could have conceived; the end for which they are communicated is the most worthy that can be assigned,—being nothing short of the glory of God in the eternal salvation of men; and every thing is revealed which could be conducive to the end designed,—nothing being defective, nothing redundant. The revelation is in all respects, therefore, worthy of its alleged author. Whether is it more rational to ascribe such truths to the gracious communication of the Deity, or to the invention (as it must otherwise be) either of deluded enthusiasts, or of persevering knaves?

We observe, in the last place, that the divine origin of what is professedly inspired is demonstrated by its effects. It might be supposed that, if God were pleased to make a communication of truth to the world, he would give it energy, and not suffer it to fall powerless from his lips. Such, accordingly, has been the fact. Christianity established and diffused itself amidst difficulties and opposition by which any thing but a divine system would infallibly have been crushed. In its commencement, without wealth, power, learning, patronage, or numbers, it may be compared to the helplessness of its founder when in the manger at Bethlehem, except that it was surrounded rather by lions than by oxen. To Jewish prejudices it was so loathsome, and to Jewish power and pride it was so directly opposed, that it instantly encountered the bitterness of exterminating rage; equally hostile was it to pagan superstition and vice, and in this direction it experienced as little mercy: yet it lived, and grew, and flourished, while Jerusalem perished, and Rome mouldered to decay. Here is a standing miracle. Who wrought it? God? Then is Christianity divine; for God, surely, would never have borne such testimony to a falsehood.

The effects of the Gospel upon individual character are equally significant and decisive. In multitudes of instances it has done what nothing else has ever done: it has humbled the pride, subdued the passions, and transformed the heart of man; it has made him the friend of his Maker and of his

fellows, though once an enemy to both. It has made the moral desert fruitful in righteousness: instead of the thorn has come up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar has come up the myrtle-tree; and it is to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. The world by wisdom neither knew God, nor transformed man; and whatever has either revealed the one, or purified the other, is undoubtedly from heaven.

A further and most delightful evidence of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, is afforded to every man who experiences their power in his own breast. Whence can that be, dear reader, (if this is your happiness,) which enlightens your eyes, quenches your thirst of sin, awakens your holy sensibilities, and purifies your heart? Can that be a delusion which effects such realities? Can that be error which leads in the way of truth? Can that be the word of man which operates with such mighty power? Surely not. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:" and, if you have such an experience of the power of the Gospel, you have an argument for its divine origin which nothing can invalidate or overthrow.

It is alleged, however, that, with whatever evidence in its favour, there are too many difficulties connected with the scriptural claim to inspiration to permit a rational acquiescence in it; and then we are told of an incomprehensible doctrine in one place, of a seeming contradiction in another, and of defective morality in a third. Now, without entering particularly into these objections, which the limits of this Essay forbid, we make upon them three observations.

First, If all the difficulties exist which infidels have ever alleged, and to the utmost extent which has ever been imagined, they do not invalidate the evidence which has been adduced. In ordinary cases, we never refuse to admit that which is established by satisfactory proof, because there are some circumstances which we cannot reconcile with it. Respecting these we desire more information, or make further inquiry, or suspend our judgment, but this is all; we never on such a ground reject *what is proved.* If, for example, you saw a person set fire to a house by the slaking of lime, you would not doubt the fact because you were ignorant how the throwing of water upon a certain kind of stones should produce the effect. In like manner, if there

is positive and substantial proof that holy men of old spake by commission from God, whatever difficulties may exist, *the thing proved* is in all reason to be admitted. To allow it to be proved and yet not to admit it as true, is clearly contrary to common sense. Now we ask any man who will examine the evidence to say whether the inspiration of the prophets and apostles is proved or not: if it be not, we have done; if it be, the allegation of difficulties proves nothing but the want of more full information on those particular points. The treatment which divine revelation receives at the hands of unbelievers is very often unfair in this respect. They look at the difficulties *only*, and dwell upon them as though there were no positive proof: whereas the only just and honourable method plainly is to consider the evidence *for* inspiration as well and as fully as the objections against it, and to put the entire affirmative evidence in one scale, while the real or imaginary difficulties are put in the other. Such a process makes them appear truly diminutive and unimportant.

Secondly, Many, (it may be said, most) of the alleged difficulties connected with divine revelation, vanish entirely upon a careful and candid inquiry. Many of them are founded upon the English translation of the Scriptures, which, however excellent as a whole, no man ever pretended to be perfect, much less inspired; and these altogether disappear on a just rendering of the original. Many of them are obviated by a careful attention to the purity of the original itself, as now facilitated by the comparison of the large number of manuscripts which divine goodness has preserved to us. Many of them are removed by a knowledge of Oriental customs, which elucidate parables and forms of speech otherwise obscure or unintelligible. In a word, thickly beset as the path of an inquirer into the divine authority of revelation may seem to be with difficulties, he no sooner pursues his way among them than the great bulk of them disappear. Knowledge, consideration, and candour, effectually dispel them.

Thirdly, The difficulties which remain (and some undoubtedly do remain), are neither of a different kind, nor of a greater amount, than may naturally be expected. In this case, one is really ready to ask, What would infidels have? Would they have the oldest books in the world as free from obscurity as a horn-book? Would they have the language,

the allusions, and the metaphors, of persons who have lived in various ages and in various countries as familiar, and to them as appropriate, as their own conversation? Would they have manuscripts which have passed from hand to hand through thousands of years, and have been written and re-written perhaps thousands of times, as literally accurate as a printed book, when, with the utmost care, no printer in the world, probably, ever issued a perfectly accurate volume from the press? Would they have a work of which *God* professes to be the author to contain no mysteries, no doctrine above the comprehension or the unaided discovery of mankind? Verily, if the Bible were such a book, then we should have a new class of objections against it; we should then be told, and might be told with truth, that a book without mysteries could not be divine, nor one without obscurities be almost as old as the creation. The objections made against the Bible as it is, rest, in these instances, upon points which harmonize with its character, and confirm its pretensions.

If it should seem strange that God should have permitted so important a volume as the Oracles of truth to be liable even to cavils, or if it should be thought that it would have been better to array it with so much light that no objection could ever have been formed against it, it should be remembered that our Maker acts upon the principle of calling into action the powers he has conferred upon us, and of requiring the exercise of a right spirit. Upon his works he has engraven his name in such a manner that, while it may be read, it may also be overlooked. It is the same with his word. There is evidence enough for the satisfaction of every honest inquirer, and there are materials enough for objection to every one who wishes to employ them. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." In thus requiring the consideration of evidence in a right spirit, God requires nothing beyond our capacity or our duty; and either to allow ourselves to be ignorant, and then to make willing ignorance a pretext for unbelief, or to use knowledge for the purpose of perversion and cavil, cannot but forfeit the character of an honest inquirer, and expose us no less to our own reproaches, than to the displeasure of our Maker.

Such is the general argument to show that God has made a revelation to mankind, and that those who in the Scrip-

tures profess to do so, really spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In the hope of carrying all my readers along with me in the acknowledgment of this truth, I shall henceforth take it for granted. We shall now be at liberty to contemplate God, and man, and the whole world of spiritual things, in the light which this blessed volume casts upon them. We shall not have to walk in darkness, or to lament that a dimness rests upon any of the objects with which it is important for us to be acquainted. The Lord himself hath spoken, and by the mouth of his servants hath brought hidden things to light. At this fountain of knowledge we may drink our fill with infinite satisfaction, and without danger, for it is as pure as it is copious. Here is not only every thing we want to know, but every thing conveyed in language of unquestionable truth. It is not the opinion of man, nor the wisdom of the seraphim, but the Oracles of God. His statements contain no error, and lead to no mistake. His word *may* be taken, though for things unseen by mortal eye, and for the unfathomable secrets of his own bosom. Nay, it *must* be taken. He speaks with authority and demands submission. Questions and doubts must be heard no more, whenever it can be affirmed that "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." His words are but another name for his deeds. "Hath he said, and will he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?" "Verily I say unto you," said our Lord, "heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one jot or tittle of my word shall fail." Here then we bow. At this point we terminate our inquiries, and rest. We hear the same voice which will be heard through the universe at the consummation of all things; and the declarations to which we now listen are those which the last judgment will re-echo and confirm. Which of my dear readers feels lying upon him the awful denunciations of this book? Henceforth remember they are true, and as certain as the ordinances of heaven. Yes, and certain like the ordinances of heaven too, are the "exceeding great and precious promises," Christian, which sustain your hope.

ESSAY IV.

THE REVEALED CHARACTER OF GOD.

HAVING found reason to conclude that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that the Sacred Scriptures contain a revelation from God of truths relating to our duty and welfare, we of course yield ourselves without scruple to their guidance. We may not now question any particular part of their contents. What we have had to do in the first instance has been to examine the validity of the entire claim to inspiration. If this be not admitted, let the whole of revelation be rejected; if it be, let the whole be received. Every part of it is stamped with equal authority, and with an authority which challenges equal and uniform respect.

The light which has thus visited us from heaven throws itself on a variety of most important and interesting objects, among which we naturally advert, in the first place, to the character of God. We have already seen that the existence of God is manifest from his works, together with his eternal power and godhead; but much concerning him which it is highly important for us to know could not have been learned from this source: while more could have been dimly guessed at, and these guesses would, after all, have been but the imaginings of men, without certainty, and without authority. Even upright man must have had much to learn from revelation concerning the glory of his Maker; how much more the fallen, whose minds have been so long under the influence of corruption and perverseness! "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their inconsiderate heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

We consult the Word of God, therefore, for a development of his own character; nor shall we consult it in vain. "The

message we have heard of him" is amply instructive. As a preliminary or introductory lesson, we are taught that there is but one God. "For thus saith the Lord, I am God, and there is none else. There is no God besides me; yea, I know not any." Beings of great excellency and might there may be, and doubtless there are, and such as receive subordinately and metaphorically the name of gods, a term, indeed, which is applied even to men in exalted stations; but, in the strict and proper sense of the term, there is only one God. No other being possesses the same attributes. Jehovah stands unrivalled and alone.

In reference to the attributes of this one God, it is obvious to observe, in passing, that inspired testimony confirms the lessons which nature teaches,—not, indeed, respecting the existence of God, a fact which can be learnt *only* from the works which demonstrate it, and which it were nothing less than absurd to have comprehended within a divine revelation; but concerning those attributes which are, with perfect clearness, graven upon universal nature. If we hence learn his eternal power and godhead, as the manifest author of all things, with these lessons the sacred word fully accords. For thus it is written: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. There is none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

We turn more particularly, however, to the *new* light which the Scriptures throw on the divine character, and the additional attributes which they exhibit. And here I must be allowed to say, that I am oppressed with the magnitude of the subject which is before me. It is not merely that I have to speak of God, but of his whole character. It were enough to be employed in the consideration of any one of his attributes; but what shall be done in an attempt to delineate them all? It is manifest that I can attempt nothing more than a sketch, and that I must select a few features, such as may be best adapted to give the great outline with fidelity. In doing so I shall class them as illustrative of his nature, his character, and his ways.

Among attributes pertaining to *the nature* of God we notice, first, his *spirituality*. This is taught by our Lord in his simple declaration to the woman of Samaria, "God is a

spirit." To understand what is meant by this expression, we should recollect that all substances known to us are, according to their manifestation of two very distinct sets of properties, thrown into the two great classes of matter and spirit. Among the necessary properties of matter, are size, shape, inertness, impenetrability, variously combined with the accidental properties of hardness, colour, and many others: spirit is capable of action, of thought, of feeling; and, though it *may* be limited, is not necessarily so. Now God is a spirit. If we feel still that we know nothing of the essence of a spirit, so neither do we know any thing of the essence of matter. We know nothing, either of matter or spirit, but their properties; the properties of matter being obvious to the senses, and those of spirit being perceived by the mind.

What we learn by being told that God is a spirit is, first, that he is incorporeal. He has not, like ourselves, a body, nor does any material substance enter at all into the constitution of his nature. Secondly, that he possesses the intellectual and active character inseparably connected with our idea of spirit. He perceives, he thinks, he feels, he resolves, he acts; all which things he is continually represented in Scripture as doing; and it is probable that this resemblance of our Maker to ourselves is intimated in the declaration, that God made man "in his own image."

A second attribute pertaining to the nature of God is *infinity*. Spirit, like matter, is capable of having limits, as our own spirits unquestionably have; but limits are not, as they are to matter, essential to spirit. A spirit may be without limits, of a magnitude and extent altogether boundless. Such a spirit is God. He claims to be present everywhere. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." This boundlessness of the divine nature constitutes the attributes of omnipresence and omniscience, thus beautifully exhibited in the language of the psalmist:—

"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me.
Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou compassest my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo! O Lord,
thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.
Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

Psalm cxxxix. 1–16.

A third attribute, which we notice as pertaining to the nature of God, is his *unity*. As there is but one God, so God himself is one. "Hear, O Israel," said the ancient lawgiver, "the Lord our God is one Lord." Not a parent deity begetting a thousand others, or a supreme godhead rent and split into minor divinities; but *one*—of essence undivided, in mind and action single and entire. Yet we are given to understand, that, in the godhead, there is a distinction, though not a division,—a united trinity, though not a separate three. "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." The same fact is indicated by the manner in which all the sacred Three are spoken of in the Scriptures as possessing divine attributes and as performing divine works; but by no passages more clearly than the apostolical benediction, and the institution of baptism. The former runs thus: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." The latter is similar: "Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." It may be deemed quite incredible, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, would have been thus associated by an inspired apostle, and by our Lord himself, if there were not among them an entire equality and an essential unity.

I am not about to offer any explanation of the fact thus declared. We allow it to be a mystery beyond the solution of human sagacity; but so are many other things, as vegetable and animal life for example, which, upon satisfactory evidence, we believe to be facts: the evidence being satisfactory,

therefore, we in like manner believe the trinity in the divine nature to be a fact. On this subject we claim to be unincumbered by the phraseology of men, who have grievously "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." We feel that, in its full import, the word *person* is not applicable to the divine trinity; and, when we perceive that the Scriptures themselves have employed no term to express the nature of the distinction subsisting in the godhead, it would seem obvious to conclude that none is capable of expressing it, and that none ought to be employed. Human nature contains nothing analogous to this property of the divine, and we are therefore incompetent to understand it; just in the same way as we are incompetent to form ideas of eternity, omnipresence, or foreknowledge: yet it is obvious that these properties have in them nothing impossible, contradictory, or absurd; although, through the limitations of our own nature, they are beyond our knowledge. It is important to remember that, whatever distinction subsists in the godhead, God is but one. Not a syllable in the Scriptures authorizes the conclusion that there are three Gods, or that there is any other inferiority or subordination among the adorable Three than such as arises out of a voluntary concurrence in the prosecution of divine operations.

We proceed to notice some attributes pertaining to *the character* of God.

The first of these is *holiness.* "This is the message which we have heard of him, that God is light, (a fit emblem of purity,) and in him is no darkness at all." The reader will readily call to remembrance the song of which the same attribute is the burden; "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." The idea of holiness is rectitude, or entire freedom from moral evil; as expressed in another passage, "A God of truth, without iniquity; just and right is he." We now look, therefore, into the state of feeling within the bosom of the Eternal, his thoughts, his emotions, his purposes, and we learn that he is in all respects what he ought to be. His whole character is conformable with perfect excellence, without a single deviation or impropriety. No feelings are improperly or unduly excited; there is no choice of evil, nor is he ever chargeable with it, but he hates it with a perfect and untempted hatred. Justice, faithfulness, and truth, are but diversified aspects of God's holiness.

A second attribute pertaining to the character of God is *benevolence*. It is the brief, but beautiful declaration of the apostle, that "God is love." This is to be understood of the essential and habitual state of the divine mind. He delights in the happiness of other beings; this is the only state of other beings in which he takes any pleasure; and the pleasure he takes in this is not negative or indifferent, but active and intense.

The Scriptures are far from instructing us, however, that happiness is the only state which God has actually caused. We read of many calamities which he has inflicted, and we are authorized to trace them up to his wrath. It is manifest from hence that he is capable of being displeased, and of manifesting his displeasure in awful methods. What we are taught respecting the essential benevolence of the divine being is, that the feelings and impulses of his mind, left to its own operation, and not acted upon by any external cause of displeasure, will be uniformly and entirely kind. Of his own accord he will never do, or think of doing, any thing but what tends to the promotion of happiness. He will never inflict suffering for his own pleasure, or through any impulse of his own mind alone.

If it be then asked, why a being who delights only in the communication of happiness should not make all other beings actually happy, but should sometimes cause misery, the answer is, that his benevolence is obviously limited by his holiness. A holy being can clearly impart none but holy pleasures, nor can he regard any but holy beings with complacency; since, if he should do so, he would be no longer holy. Since God in his holiness is unchangeable, therefore, if any of his creatures become unholy they inevitably incur his disapprobation, with such expressions of it as their conduct may deserve: and if it so happen that the approbation of God is important to their happiness, and his disapprobation a dreadful calamity to them, their sufferings are plainly to be referred, not to any deficiency of God's benevolence, but to the necessity of his holiness.

If any question be raised on this point, it must be whether benevolence *ought* to be limited by holiness; or, whether a person is as kind as he ought to be, who is as kind as he can be without doing wrong. None but an interested party would entertain a doubt upon such a subject. Righteousness

is clearly of the first obligation, and kindness of the second. He who carries his kindness so far as to countenance and reward iniquity, sacrifices his uprightness, and loses all title to our esteem.

It pertains, indeed, to a benevolent person not to resent offences, or to act in a spirit of retaliation or revenge; but rather to be willing to pass them by. And in this direction the benevolence of God exercises and extends itself infinitely. This was the name which he proclaimed of old: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Though innumerable and aggravated offences have been committed against him, he resents none, he retaliates none, he punishes none; on the contrary, he overlooks all, and makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good. When he is spoken of in the Scripture as punishing iniquity, it is not as a matter of his own inclination, or as induced by any bearing of the offence against himself; but these declarations always relate to iniquity as a crime against his government, and to his conduct in the punishment of it as a governor and a judge. Of the government to which I have thus been obliged to allude, we shall treat fully in a subsequent Essay; at present it may be enough to observe, that sufferings inflicted in the administration of justice are clearly compatible with benevolence. The condemnation of a criminal by any person as a magistrate, can never be used as an argument against his kindness as a man. We return, then, to the scriptural truth that, as to personal offences, the proper scope of forgiveness, God is of himself infinitely ready to forgive; and in no other respect does he attach painful consequences to them, than by that proportionate disapprobation which, as we have seen, his actual holiness necessitates. It is a further proof of his benevolence, that he is ready to withdraw this disapprobation when the state of mind which elicits it is rectified, through a system of mediation which he himself has instituted for the purpose. With regard to judicial punishments, they are declared to be his "strange work." He has by the sacrifice of his own Son made a wonderful provision for a sinner's deliverance from them; and when, by perseverance in iniquity, their infliction is rendered inevitable, he laments the folly and the crime. "As I live, saith the Lord, I delight not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he turn and live."

We advert, lastly, to some attributes pertaining to *the ways* of God. As we propose to consider in a separate Essay what relates to his *moral government*, we shall confine ourselves in the present to the *natural dominion*, which, of right and of course, as the Creator, he exercises over the works of his hands. The principal attributes to be here noticed, are *sovereignty* and *supremacy;* but we shall find them blended with *liberty* and *wisdom.*

In his natural dominion, the divine being lays claim to an entire and absolute *sovereignty.* "He giveth not an account of any of his matters; but doeth according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." It is plain, from these declarations, and from other language employed on the same subject, that the term *sovereignty,* as applied to God, means an entire freedom from external control, and nothing more. He does not allow others to dictate his measures, or to interfere with his conduct; but does whatsoever seemeth good in his own sight. But it does not at all follow from this, that his purposes and proceedings are not under *his own* control. An idea has been extensively entertained, that God, acting in sovereignty, not only does what he pleases, but does it *merely because he pleases;* as though his actions were wilful and arbitrary, inconsiderate of the motives by which they ought, in wisdom, to be determined. Nothing can be more incorrect. The Scripture uniformly represents the conduct of the Most High as regulated by his benevolence and purity. Whatever he resolves to do, he chooses because it "seems *good* in his sight," and for this reason alone. The will of God, therefore, is not to be regarded as a tyrannical and unruly power, which, as it is elevated far above the interference of creatures, has escaped equally from the government of the Creator; on the contrary, his holiness and benevolence hold it in the most entire subjection; and it is, indeed, a part of the holiness of the divine nature, that his will is essentially and unalterably in harmony with these excellent attributes. Ever doing what he pleases, it is impossible that any thing should please him but that which is holy and good. Though sovereign, therefore, God is not arbitrary: he overlooks no consideration proper to affect his decision, he repels none, he slights none; he observes all, he weighs all, and according to the just value of all he determines. The sovereignty of God

thus intimately allies itself with *wisdom*, which consists in the choice of the best ends, and of the best means of attaining them. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and his understanding is infinite." And twice is he called "the only-wise God." Whatever he may think proper to do, both the thing itself, and the reasons for it, will be not only unquestionably good, but the very best which infinite wisdom could devise or entertain.

The ends which God actually pursues in his works are obviously many and various, in relation to animate and inanimate, to rational and irrational nature; but they are stated in the Scriptures to be all resolvable into one great object,—namely, his own glory. All things are declared to be "by him, and through him, and *for him*." And the celestial song is, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." This representation has sometimes been regarded as attaching an imputation of undue self-exaltation to the divine being, as though he intended ostentatiously to exhibit himself, instead of regarding the interests of his creatures. Such a feeling might indeed exist towards any *creature* who should adopt a similar design; but, when referred to the *Creator*, it proceeds upon an entire forgetfulness of his station and character. There is no being who stands in the relation of a superior to him, or even in that of an equal; there is none, therefore, whose interest he is called upon to regard before, or as, his own: hence a primary regard to his own glory is a matter of rectitude with him, and to depart from it would be an instant wrong. Add to this, that the character of God is such, so holy and benevolent, that whatever may be to his glory will necessarily tend to the happiness of others, subject only to the effects of possible misconduct. Hence the Creator's honour is identified with the creature's good, or with proceedings affording opportunities of good. His excellency consisting in being holy and benevolent, benevolent and holy measures are the only ones which can be to his honour; and the advancement of his own honour, therefore, binds him to the interest of every creature, save those whom his holiness may constrain him to disapprove. His aiming at his own glory makes no alteration in the course of action which he must adopt if this were not his aim; and it is an object

which the whole universe of holy beings may well rejoice that he pursues.

From this view of the divine sovereignty, it is obvious that the scope of it is distinctly circumscribed. The Most High himself does not assume to be sovereign in every thing, but only in such departments of his conduct as benevolence and holiness permit. Hence he exercises no sovereignty in his moral government. Whether as a magistrate he shall punish sinners, and in what measure, is not a matter at his option, but of inflexible rule and righteousness. In like manner he makes no appeal to sovereignty on the question whether he shall bring creatures into existence without adequate means of happiness and powers of action; this is due both to them and to himself, and is a rule of rectitude never departed from. Having made these limitations, the only department of divine conduct which remains, is *the communication of benefits not equitably required by our condition;* and this is the whole of the scope which our Maker claims for the exercise of his sovereignty. It is not until the lord of the vineyard has paid every man his due, that he exclaims, "May I not do what I will with mine own?" We hear God say, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy;" but never, I will condemn whom I will condemn.

The divine ways are further characterized by *supremacy;* by which term I mean to denote the control which God has over all that he has made. The heaven and the earth, and doubtless innumerable other worlds, are full of active elements, as well as of creatures whom God has constituted with active capacities, and subjected to a thousand impulses. Looking on this world, we see not only waters, winds, and fires, but countless tribes of living things in ceaseless motion; and, above all, the human multitude, acting various parts, and pursuing various schemes, every man after the desire of his own heart. Yet all this individual, confused, energetic, and often repellent action, voluntary and involuntary, is comprehended within the controlling power of the Almighty. He has a plan to which all this is subservient. "The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of it he will restrain."

There is a material difference, however, between the exercises of the divine supremacy directed to the two great classes

of action, the voluntary and the involuntary. Over involuntary agents, such as the winds, for example, God maintains such a supremacy that he may be said to actuate them, or cause them to act, and himself to do whatsoever is done by them. But to voluntary agents, such as men, it pertains by the nature which God has given them to act of themselves, or to choose their own actions; and, in accordance with this constitution, God limits the exercise of his supremacy over them to two points: he either induces them by a direct influence to choose what he intends they should do, or he renders what they do without such influence conducive to his designs. In this method the divine supremacy consists with the natural and essential *liberty* of voluntary agents.

Some persons have been pleased to call God *the doer of all things*, but certainly on no scriptural authority. Whatever mystery there may be in the abstract question, how a being can be created so as to act independently of the Creator, it is certain that our Maker considers us, and that we feel ourselves, to be so constituted. According to the current language of the Scriptures, also, our actions are our own, and not God's. Indeed, if every apparent action of the creature were really but an action of the Creator by the creature, the very notion of God's supremacy would be rendered absurd, seeing that the universe would comprehend nothing but his own acts. Closely linked, as the Creator and the creature must be, since "in him we live, and move, and have our being," whatever measure of independence is necessary to render our actions our own God has given us, so that he is not the doer of our deeds. When, therefore, we find such language as that of the prophet, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" we understand it not of causation, but of permission, and of his design to make the passions of men fulfil his righteous pleasure.

As the actions which are performed in the universe are thus divided into two great classes, namely, those of the Creator and those of the creature, it is almost obvious to observe, that divine election, or predestination, is confined to his own actions and their consequences. Election is nothing more than God's choice; and it is appropriate, therefore, only to his own actions. To choose for others would be to take away the voluntary agency which he has bestowed. He is capable of bringing to pass what he pleases without inter-

fering with the agency of other beings, which he leaves to be determined by themselves, while he also determines his own. From eternity he foresees all things, and he makes his election accordingly; and if there are beings whom he designs to lead to a part which they would not act without his influence, the exertion of that influence is an act of his own, which he predetermines, and which he is competent to carry into effect without any infringement of the freedom of the creature therein. The wickedness of the wicked, therefore, is foreseen and permitted, but it is not predestinated, nor are its consequences. No man is foreordained to sin, or to misery: sin is nothing but man's own act, and misery nothing but its inevitable companion.

Such is the brief delineation which it is competent to us now to exhibit of the revealed character of God. It is but a sketch; yet, as a sketch, *how beautiful!* Standing in reverent attention, while God himself draws aside the veil which conceals his glory, how much do we perceive to admire and adore! In his NATURE, *a spirit*—free from corporeal grossness, and adapted to the highest possible exercises of intellect, feeling, and action; a spirit *infinite*—being everywhere what he is, and thus rendered competent to be God of the universe; of an entire *unity*—suited, therefore, to his boundless elevation above all other beings, and giving a glorious character of unity to his works; yet of a mysterious *trinity*—thus having a capacity for social pleasures, without which, from his very nature and exaltation, he must have stood alone, isolated, and absolutely solitary, even in the midst of a universe so densely peopled by his power. In his CHARACTER *holy*—without a spot, without a bias to evil, without an infirmity in righteousness; *benevolent*—having but one voluntary impulse, and that of unmingled and infinite goodness; and thus combining the two most excellent principles by which any character can be distinguished. In his WAYS *sovereign*—entitled to do as he pleases, yet *wise*, invariably pleased with that which is holiest and best; and *supreme*—controlling all things, and bending them to his will, yet sacredly regarding the liberty and rights of every creature he has made. We say again, *How beautiful!* Where else is such a representation to be found of the Eternal? The imaginations of men have invariably clothed the Deity, either with the grossness of flesh and the sensuality of carnal

appetite, or with the infirmities, the passions, and the crimes of mortality; and we want no proof of the origin of the Scriptures more decisive than this superhuman exhibition of God. None but his own finger could have drawn such a portrait.

How worthy our Maker is of the station which he fills! He is actually God, eternal and supreme, by the necessity of his nature; and if he had not been a being of infinite excellence, he could not have been otherwise than God: neither, as our Maker, could it ever have been otherwise than our duty to have loved him, as the author of our being, with all our hearts. It is conceivable that, when the Deity, whose existence was evinced by the works of his hands, should be made known to us more minutely, we might not have found him worthy of our complacency. But how different is the fact! We now behold the author of the universe unveiled; and we see a being, not of ordinary excellence alone, but of excellence perfect, and so elevated, in qualities both natural and moral, that we say at once, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to be God over all, and shalt be blessed for evermore." Where should such a being dwell but on the universal throne? And who shall regret to see him there? If there were a thousand candidates for such a situation, "who among the sons of the mighty could be compared to the Lord?" To what other being could we be willing the elevation should be assigned?

And this is our Maker! the father of our spirits! What a delightful thought! There is no purer source of gratification to a child than that which is furnished by the excellencies of his parent. When he finds him universally admired and beloved, what a noble joy may swell his bosom as he exclaims—This is my father! Such a source of happiness is open to us. Survey with the closest attention the glories of the Most High, and you may appropriate them all. They are not the excellencies of a stranger, of some being far removed from you, whom you may distantly behold and admire; but of a near and intimate relative, to whose bosom you may cling, and say, "This is my father, God; and I exult in his glories as my own."

In what an admirable attitude does it set the law of God, that the being who commands our benevolence should so eminently deserve our complacency. If it had not been so,

this could not have excused us from our duty; but since it is so, it renders far more inexcusable our neglect. Whatever a parent may be, an undutiful son is wrong; but to be undutiful to an excellent parent is clearly an aggravated crime.

How unutterably painful it is to think that such a being should have suffered neglect, or encountered hostility! Was it against *Him* that any of the hosts of heaven rebelled? Is it to be rid of *Him* that the heart of man turns atheist, and says There is no God, or I wish there were none? Baseness and folly ineffable! What! monstrous wretch, wouldst thou destroy the brightest excellence which the universe contains, the concentration and the pattern of every virtue? Thou wouldst do better to blot out the sun from the face of heaven. Wouldst thou cast down from his throne so holy and benevolent a ruler? Thou wouldst do better to plunge the whole creation into non-existence. Quench every light in darkness, and reduce the universe to ashes, ere thou dost what would reduce it to endless wailing and despair. And wherefore this strange hostility? Wherefore is the carnal mind enmity against God? Why is he not in all thy thoughts? Plainly but for one reason—that he is holy, and thou art corrupt. You love sin, and God hates it; and that is the reason you cannot bear to realize his presence. Knowing that he exists, and that so long as he exists you must be under his abhorrence, you would purchase an easier indulgence of your passions, not merely by the oblivion, but by the extinction of his being. What a den of demons your heart must be! In what place besides could such a thought have had birth? And how long will it be ere its existence and indulgence shall humble you in the dust?

The censure thus directed by common consent against the avowed atheist requires to be taken home by every one of us to our own hearts. We have all of us been enemies to God, and perhaps many of us are so still. We have not rendered him the service which is his due, but have withheld from him the heart which he claims. Practically we have been living, and have preferred to live, without God in the world. And why have we done so? Is the character of God too holy for us; and do we prefer things of earth to the joys of his friendship? Alas! how long shall this corruption reign over us? If God be excellent, why do we not delight in

him? What can a disposition which estranges us from him be but an evil one, and whither can it lead but to final separation and ruin?

It is material to observe how directly and how forcibly the character of God, benevolent as he is, throws us upon the necessity of self-government in order to happiness. He has so made us as to be sensible to his approbation and disapprobation; and he, being holy, can approve nothing but what is holy too. Hence, if we are not holy we cannot be approved by him, but, on the contrary, shall be disapproved; and this will infallibly make us miserable. It is a vain thing to imagine that, because God is good, therefore he will never suffer a creature of his to be unhappy; since it is evident that his goodness is limited by his holiness, and that his holiness so bears upon us, with our capacities, as infallibly to render every unholy man a wretched one. Even his infinite readiness to forgive does not affect this state of things; inasmuch as God's disapprobation of a sinner is not a matter of resentment, but an exercise of his holiness, which is unchangeable. Supposing a sinner to be forgiven and remain unholy, God must still abhor him. Hopes founded by ungodly men on the mercy of God, therefore, are utterly futile. We allow that they have nothing to apprehend from his resentment, but they have every thing to dread from his holiness. The sense of his abhorrence is hell; and there is no way of avoiding it but by abandoning iniquity. Sinner, continue in sin, and you perish; the holiness of God, like a consuming fire, will destroy you. But "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

ESSAY V.

GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT OF MAN.

When we look into the manner in which God conducts himself towards man, we perceive it to be marked by a

striking and important peculiarity. He does not govern this race of creatures as he does the winds and the waves, merely by the decisions of his own will; but he uses means adapted to lead us voluntarily to the cultivation of certain dispositions, and the pursuit of certain objects. He instructs, he persuades, and he announces the consequences, good or ill, with which our treatment of his persuasions will be connected. This is what we mean by *the moral government* of God; namely, his government of man as a moral agent by leading him to the pursuit of moral ends, under the influence of rewards and punishments as moral means. Such a system comprehends three principal parts; first, *the law*, in which God instructs us in the nature of the dispositions he requires us to cultivate; next, *the motives* which he brings to bear on us as persuasives to this end; and last, *the adjudication* of reward or punishment, as the conduct of each may deserve.

It is needless to say that the existence and operation of such a system is apparent in the Scriptures, since the reader will doubtless recollect in a moment how large a part of their contents consists of precepts, promises, or threatenings; and how prominent an object in their sketches of futurity is constituted by the general judgment, when God will reward every man according to his works. Without quoting numerous passages, it may be sufficient to observe that no testimony on this subject can be more decisive than that of our Lord, when a certain lawyer asked him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." This language is in full harmony with the whole of sacred writ, and is almost verbally reiterated by the apostle of the Gentiles, when he says that God "will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath."

Though we have no account of the transaction, no doubt can be entertained, I conceive, that all the great principles of this administration were made known to our first parent

upon his creation, and before any arrangements were made with him respecting the fruits in the garden of Eden. It was the basis on which that particular experiment was founded. If a question should be raised as to the continuance of the same system of moral government after the fall, it would surely be abundantly answered by a reference to the contents and the entire aspect of the sacred volume. God is really acting upon the same system, and has been so in every age. When the Jewish lawyer put the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" our Lord referred him to the writings of Moses; and when he adduced the moral law from thence, the same divine instructor declared him to be right: "This do, and *thou shalt live.*" In like manner the great principles of the same system are represented by the apostle as of universal application, and are laid by him as foundation-stones to that structure of gospel truth which the epistle to the Romans presents to us. "God," says he, "will render to every man according to his deeds: tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek; for there is no respect of persons with God." Such language as this surely could never have been used of a system which confined its influence to Adam.

It is true, indeed, that it is not by obedience to this primary law that God now requires or expects us, as transgressors, to seek eternal life, although it remains unchangeably certain that whoever should fulfil the law would thereby attain it. Our Maker, knowing our sinfulness, has provided another method for our actual happiness, the method of mercy through his dear Son; the Scripture teaches us, however, that the method of mercy, far from superseding the moral government of God, is superadded to it, and requires the perpetuity of it as the very basis for its own standing. It is only by the bearing of God's law and threatenings, that man is reduced to the state of criminality and danger in which he needs the interposition of mercy; and, if the system of government to which the law and threatenings belong is no longer in force, neither can they have any force, nor condemnation and ruin any existence.

Now, if it has pleased God to comprehend us within such

a mode of government as has been described, it becomes a subject of very serious and interesting consideration. Here is a restraint put upon our liberty, and very serious consequences are attached to our submission. If, indeed, the fact is really so, no investigation instituted by us can alter it; but there may be much use, as well as interest, in examining the real character of the dispensation, inasmuch as we shall thus learn how to estimate it—whether to think ourselves hardly dealt with, and placed in circumstances in which we may justifiably resist or repine; or to regard the yoke as a righteous and an easy one, to which we may cheerfully, as well as necessarily, submit.

An examination of the moral government of God naturally bears upon its *principle*, its *details*, and its *end*.

We advert, in the first place, to *the principle* of God's moral government; and ask, *Is it righteous?* In other words, our question is, Has God *a right* to comprehend us in such a system of subjection and retribution?

Liberty is dear to every man; and the question just proposed may most naturally and justly be put whenever a restriction is imposed upon it. If any person were unexpectedly to say to us, "I require a certain service of you, and if you do not render it I shall inflict a punishment," we should certainly look up to see who it was that so addressed us, and ask whether the speaker had any right to assume such an attitude. Now, although in the case before us it is God that speaks, and his majesty demands our reverence, none of us need fear to make a similar inquiry as to the principle and foundation of his government. His terror shall not make us afraid. He does not employ the blaze of his glory to cover injustice. His claim to authority is not a usurped, but a righteous one; he has laid bare the foundation of it in order that it may be known to be righteous; and, far from being offended, he will be gratified by seeing the meanest of his subjects examine it with the utmost rigour.

A right, then, to establish over us a system of moral government arises out of the fact that God is our maker. As the author of our being he has a discretionary power, within certain limits, to determine its conditions. I readily acknowledge that the fact that God is our maker does not give him a right to do *every thing* with us. The Creator is, doubtless, under an obligation of holiness to treat the creature

he has made with at least equitable kindness. He has no right, of his own pleasure, to put us into any circumstances, either of actual misery, or in their own nature tending to misery; inasmuch as he is a parent, and any parent would be violating every principle of rectitude if he were to act in such a manner towards his child. But, within this limit, to follow out the comparison, and among the various arrangements which may be conducive to his children's good, a parent is surely not only entitled, but required, to choose the mode of their treatment, and to select such as may seem best in his sight. Whether the mode of treatment which God has adopted for us is equitably kind, we shall inquire presently; all that we are concerned to affirm now is, that, if it be so, he has done us no wrong. There is no overstraining of his own rights, nor infringement upon ours, in the mere fact of his selecting a particular method of conduct towards us. Among such as are wise and good, *as our Maker*, he has the right of selection; and if that which he has selected be wise and good, we have no cause to complain.

Persons disposed to murmur at the divine government have sometimes used such language as this: "True, God has made me; but I did not ask him to make me, and I wish he had never done so. Ought he to make me a party to such arrangements as he announces, and to render me liable to their awful issues, without my consent?" Without stopping to admire the reasonableness of a proposal that a being not yet in existence should be asked whether he would like to be brought into existence or not, we may observe, that, as the foundation of a charge against God, such language has no force whatever. No complaint can be brought against him if the conditions of our being are *equitable in fact.* To be dealt with equitably can surely be no grievance to any man. If we are not so dealt with our murmurs will be just; but if we are, it never can warrant our displeasure that we were not previously consulted on the subject.

Upon this point, however, we may go further, and say, that God has given existence to no creature, who, if he had been consulted in a right state of mind, would not have rejoiced in the prospect of it. Existence in equitable circumstances is in itself a benefit, and a benefit the greater in proportion to the capacities and endowments conferred. Like all other good things, our existence may be perverted

to misery; but only the man who has misused it ever wishes that he had not existed. So a spendthrift may wish he had never had his fortune; but he is surely not entitled to murmur at the bounty which bestowed it on him.

If we have thus justified the principle of the divine government, we proceed, secondly, to *its details*. If the principle is righteous, are the details *equitable?*

I may here advert to an objection which has sometimes been adduced against applying the principles of human justice to the administration of God. His ways are so unlike ours, it has been said, that it is unsafe to argue from what is just among men to what is just with our Maker. It may be enough to say, that this objection, closely examined, has no meaning. Justice is the name of but one thing—one essential principle of correspondence between actions and relations, changing in its application as relations change, but in itself unchangeable, and always the same in the same relations. Where God sustains relations which men do not, his justice may be unlike ours; but where he sustains the same relations as ourselves, justice with him and with us is one and the same. Now he represents himself as a father and a master, names which we also bear; and when he speaks of being just in these relations, it is impossible to conceive of any other justice than that which we feel to pertain to them. In what sense can he have used this term, but that in which we understand it? Or of what use could it have been but to mislead and to deceive, to have used it in any other?

In pursuing our inquiry whether the moral government of God is equitable, we have to look at *the law*, *the motives*, and *the issues*.

We look first at *the law*. Are God's *requirements* equitable? According to the principles laid down in a former Essay, we must answer this question by asking, whether God's requirements correspond with his desert, and our capacity: if they fail in either of these points we allow them to be unjust; if they do not, no man can allege them to be so.

What, then, is the law of God, in which his requirements are embodied? I conceive that it is not to be found in the ten commandments, which, however honourable and important among the precepts of God, have no just pretensions to be considered as a summary of his law; nor can I refrain

from expressing my conviction of the immense mischief which has arisen from their having been regarded in this light. When our Lord was asked for the law, he quoted the following words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the law; and that which it requires is *love.* But is it the love of complacency, or the love of benevolence, which we are called on to fix upon our Maker and our fellow-creatures? Unquestionably, as I conceive, the love of benevolence exclusively, and not, in any sense or measure, the love of complacency. Now benevolence is only another word for kindness; a regard to the happiness, interest, and honour of another. The law requires, therefore, that we be kind to God above all, or that we cherish a regard to his honour and interest before our own, and "with our whole heart," or with all the strength of feeling we have; while, with regard to our fellow-creatures' welfare, we love them as ourselves.

We ask, then, Is this more than God deserves, as the author of our being, and the creator likewise of the beings that surround us? If it be, let any man propose an alteration, and taking the scale of duty into his own hands, adjust it more accurately: let him say how much a creature may justly love himself better than his Creator and his fellows.

We ask again, Is this more than we can render? God requires of us, it seems, the government of our feelings, the production of an habitual and prevailing sentiment and feeling corresponding with our relations. Now we have already endeavoured to show that we are constituted with a capacity of governing our feelings, and of moulding them in accordance with our relations: hence, therefore, it follows that God requires nothing more than we have a capacity to perform. The very terms of the law, indeed, adapt it to our strength, whatever its amount may be; seeing that it is only "with all our strength," that is, with whatever feeling we may be able to produce, that we are required to love the Lord. There is then no violation of equity in the law.

In reference to the equity of the divine government, we look secondly at *its motives.* Are these of just adaptation, and of suitable force for the production of the effect? In other words, are we shown reasons enough why we should love God and our neighbour?

Here it may be observed, that the very contemplation of our relation to God and our fellow-creatures brings with it a sense of obligation in itself fitted and sufficient to determine our conduct. Every man who will consider for a moment must be convinced that he ought to love his Maker above all, and his fellow-creatures as himself; and he never can hold himself justified in not doing what he knows he ought to do. This sense of obligation is the commanding power of the mind; and no man needs anything more than a consciously just appeal to it, to furnish him with a good and sufficient reason for that which is required of him.

To this in our case, however, other motives are added, making a strong appeal to the principle of gratitude, and likewise to our sense of interest. "By the mercies of God" we are besought to yield ourselves to his service. We are instructed that obedience and disobedience respectively will produce a direct effect upon our own minds; the one causing disquiet and wretchedness, and the other affording an inward peace. "Great peace have they that love God's law; but the wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." But principally God has informed us, that his own approbation, with suitable expressions of it, will be gained by the fulfilment of our duty; while his disapprobation, with forcible expressions of it likewise, will follow upon its neglect. The expressions of God's approbation are set forth under the idea of a reward of unutterable blessedness, such as "glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life;" and those of his disapprobation in colours proportionately awful, such as "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath."

In order that these representations may have a more tangible character and a greater effect, they are associated with a coming day of retribution, when the whole world will be assembled before the judgment-seat of Christ, and when every man will receive according to his works, the full measure of good or ill being repaid into his bosom. To crown the whole, the influence of a state, not only future, but eternal, is added to these considerations; and we are called upon to anticipate the endless perpetuity of our joy if we obey, and of our woe if we rebel. "The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Even after this momentary glance at the motives which are brought to bear upon us, I cannot be afraid to ask

whether they are fitted and sufficient to induce obedience. Let any man in his senses say whether these are, or are not, good reasons for his loving God and his neighbour; and whether any creature upon whom they bear, and who is capable of considering and appreciating them, may not reasonably be expected to yield to their power. If he can answer in the negative, let him adduce those better adapted or more weighty reasons which he thinks should be added to them.

In connexion with the equity of the divine government, we look finally at *its issues*. When the righteous and the wicked shall be severally fixed in their places of punishment or reward, will these be found to be equitable too?

"To every one that worketh good," the Lord of all will recompense "glory, honour, and peace." In what particular way this language will be fulfilled we know not; but, while it has a manifest propriety inasmuch as the expressed approbation of God is the substance of these phrases, and that is a fit recompense of rectitude in the creature, the degree of its manifestation is evidently exalted far beyond the mere desert of obedience. To love God and man ever so perfectly never could have merited such distinction; it is a reward of condescending favour, and after the manner of a bountiful God. No violation of equity, therefore, is here, though equity itself is far exceeded.

"Tribulation and anguish" will be the portion of "every one that doeth evil." Here I am aware I may be met by those who seem to take pleasure in referring to the term *fire* as used in connexion with the future state of the wicked, and in asking whether putting a poor wretch in everlasting burnings can be a fit punishment for not loving his Maker. In a subsequent Essay I shall enter at large into this subject; at present I only express my persuasion that there is no fire in hell; that the term is metaphorical; and that, in common with all terms expressive of the wrath of God, it denotes simply his disapprobation, and the severe suffering arising from it when directly and fully manifested. Now the disapprobation of God *is* a fit punishment for unholiness and disobedience to him. Nothing can possibly be more appropriate. Nor in the application of it will there be any departure from justice, seeing that every man will receive "according to his works," estimated in conjunction with his means of knowledge. "They that have sinned without

revelation shall be judged without revelation," and the severer punishment be allotted only to the greater crime.

Here again we ask if even the issues of the government of God, awful as one of them is, are wanting in equity? Wherein are the ways of the Lord unequal?

At this point, however, there occur some questions which a considerate and thoughtful person might put, and of which it may be proper to take some notice.

According to the view we have given, God has left it to every man to determine his own character and state. Now it may be asked, in the first place, *whether God is not a sovereign*, doing as he pleases with the states of men, like the potter with the clay.

Of course we acknowledge in an instant that God is a sovereign; a truth which, in a preceding Essay, we have strongly maintained. It is in the exercise of his sovereignty that he has instituted the system of government we have been describing. But he has been pleased by this very act to set limits to his own sovereignty. For the regulation of his ways towards mankind, he has thought it good to adopt the system of treating men as they deserve; so that, in this respect, having laid down a rule, he will no longer exercise his discretion. Of course, the Almighty is quite competent to make this voluntary limitation of his sovereignty, if he pleases; and, having made it, undoubtedly he will keep it as inviolate as though he possessed no sovereignty at all. In the moral government of God, then, by his own determination, there is no sovereignty.

It may be asked, in the next place, *whether there is not such a thing as predestination;* and whether the future condition of men is not foreordained from eternity?

Here again I acknowledge, in a moment, that God works according to the counsel of his own will, and that all his purposes are, like himself, from everlasting. But predestination is an act of sovereignty, and, as such, is by God himself withdrawn from the scope of his moral government. So far as this system is concerned, God does not, by any purpose of his, interfere with the agency of man; he leaves men to act of and for themselves, and will treat them according to their conduct, having predestinated no man to misery, or to sin.

It may be asked, in the third place, *whether an incapacity for obedience has not come upon man in consequence of the*

fall? Not being able here to enter so fully into this subject as might be desired, I shall resume it in another Essay: at present I only say that I conceive not. In consequence of the fall mankind are certainly and universally depraved; but, if the reader will call to mind the particulars in which we have described man's capacity for right action to consist, he will perceive that his constitution in this respect is unbroken. What the Scriptures maintain upon this subject is plain, from the fact that they treat man, in every respect, as though he were still competent to the fulfilment of his duty.

I know not any other ground on which a doubt of the equity of the divine government might be raised; and I consider myself, therefore, as now disposing of the question which relates to the equity of its details.

From the principle and the details of God's moral government we turn, in the third place, to *its end.* In all its bearings, and with all its results, is it wise and good?

It is obvious to observe, that we now stand on more tender ground than any we have hitherto occupied. In speaking of equity and rights we could use some confidence, because we are conversant with the principles by which such matters are determined, and we reason satisfactorily from ourselves to our Maker; but, when we come to speak of wisdom, and in reference to the conduct of him whose ways are far above out of our sight, our conscious ignorance should make us hesitate, lest we speak unadvisedly with our lips. With the deepest reverence for God, however, and the justest sense of our ignorance, we may venture on some not unimportant or uninteresting observations.

In the first place, it is evident that the moral government of God has an excellent and valuable end in relation to God himself. It opens a new aspect of his character, and of his relation to his creatures. It develops more of the treasures of his wisdom, and brings forth in richer abundance the stores of his bounty. It creates, I was going to say, new attributes; or, at least, it calls the divine attributes into operation in new methods. It exhibits a new mode of dealing with rational creatures, and one by which additional and superior honour is rendered to their Maker. Viewing God and man in the prior and simpler state, apart from the arrangements we have now been considering, we have merely the benevolent parent approving or disapproving the conduct

of the child, as it may happen to deserve; here we have the same parent entering upon the discipline, or, if I may so speak, the education of his child, by motives leading to the voluntary formation of a right spirit. We have in this system the exhibition of an authority far nobler than any other which can be exercised, even by the Almighty himself; authority exercised over voluntary agents, and maintained by rational considerations. Unlike the reins which he holds over the powers of the natural world, and the passive glory accruing to him from their fulfilment of his will, here is government applied to beings who act from choice; who can distinguish, consider, and appreciate the motives by which they are addressed; and who, if they yield obedience at all, will yield it in a manner which, as voluntary, and as testifying the justice and the force of the reasons on which it is founded, must be in the highest degree honourable to him to whom it is rendered. It is not, therefore, in mere arbitrariness that God's moral government has originated. It harmonizes with all his other works and ways, in having a tendency to develop his resources, and to yield him a revenue of praise.

In the second place, as the system of moral government has a valuable end, so it is pursued by the most unexceptionable and honourable means. If a kingdom, though rightfully founded, were unjustly administered; if, however equitably conducted, it were of the nature of usurpation; or if, finally, while conducive to the glory of the prince, it were oppressive to the subjects, it could be looked upon with little complacency. But in none of these aspects does the divine government afford cause of regret. We have already seen that its establishment violates no rights of man, and strictly accords with those of his Maker; we have seen, too, that none of its details err from the most unimpeachable equity: but we may now go further, and say, that the aspect of it is as truly beneficial towards the governed as it is honourable to the governor. It may be affirmed, not merely that God is pursuing his glory by us without doing us any wrong, but that he has so framed his plan as to open to us the greatest advantages. Let the recompense he has attached to obedience be here particularly marked. "Glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life," terms expressive certainly of a blessedness of no ordinary kind, are assigned as the rewards of—what?

Of loving our neighbour and our Maker: a thing fully within our capacity; a thing apart from any such recompense our imperative duty; a thing which we could not omit without inevitable misery; and a thing, finally, to which we are drawn by almost overwhelming motives. What a prize is thus set before us! To attain such a felicity, verily it is worth while to have lived. And upon terms how easy! In a method how kindly arranged! The whole system is one in which our Maker intimately combines his honour with our advantage; and it might be doubted whether his moral government may most truly be called a method for getting glory to himself, or for yielding happiness to his creatures.

Together with these aspects of the divine government, however, it is necessary to consider another, which is certainly awful, and from which the whole difficulty of the question before us springs. It is a government under which suffering actually arises. Some of God's creatures become miserable, and that to an endless duration. Now we acknowledge that this is not only a painful, but an awful fact, and that it not unnaturally suggests such questions as these: Was it on the whole worthy of a benevolent being to institute a system of proceedings under which he knew so many would actually become wretched? Would it not have been better, with his foreknowledge of this issue, either to have avoided such methods altogether, or to have kindly secured the obedience and fidelity of all?

In attempting a reply to these questions, we must be allowed to observe in the outset, that the melancholy issue which gives rise to them does not at all affect the character of the divine government itself. No man becomes miserable but by needless misconduct, and by voluntarily exposing himself to mischief when he might have secured immense advantages. The truth, therefore, still remains, that the entire tendency and adaptation of the divine government is to good. In being liable to be abused it shares the common lot of all good things. The very best gifts may be abused; and the better the gift, the worse in general are the consequences of its abuse.

If it should be imagined that, on account of this liability to abuse, God would have done better to withhold the opportunity of happiness, it may be answered that this principle is not admitted in the affairs of men. It is by no means

deemed inconsistent with wisdom, and still less with kindness, to put into a person's hands the means of bettering his condition, in conjunction with sufficient motives to the right improvement of them, although at a known hazard of abuse: and if this be admissible in us, on what ground can it be reprehensible in our Maker?

It is true that God foresaw the abuse, and might have so influenced every man as to secure his obedience; but it is clear that this would have put an end to the exercise of moral probation altogether, and have rendered the pretension to it ridiculous. If the influence of motives was to be tried at all, it was necessary that men should be left to that influence alone, apart from any interference of the governor with their choice, whether for better or worse.

This, however, is only pushing us one step farther back, and obliging us to ask, whether the foreknowledge that an experiment will fail necessarily renders the performance of it unwise. It might be so, if the direct result of the experiment constituted its whole end; but it would clearly not be so, if the main purposes to be answered by it were of a different and independent kind. Now, with God's moral government this is actually the case. It is a system of probation adapted to increase man's happiness, though liable to be perverted to his misery; yet the promotion of man's happiness is neither its only nor its chief end, but the glory of God in the character of a moral governor. This object *is* attained by carrying out the administration of the system he has adopted, whether it is improved or abused, and whether men be rendered happy by it, or miserable. In this view the experiment does not fail. Its main object is realized. If there be excellency enough in this object to render it good and wise to pursue it at the risk involved, then, notwithstanding the misery of the wicked, the moral government of God is good and wise.

It is interesting to observe here, that the risk of suffering which is actually incurred is the smallest which possibly could be incurred, and not more than must have existed even if no moral government had been instituted. The sources of misery to the disobedient are not constituted by gratuitous penalties, expressly invented or created for the crime; but are to be found in things which would have equally existed, and have been equally felt, whether employed

for this purpose or not. Sin will be punished in part by the pain which cherished iniquity inevitably produces in the breast; and in part by the sense of God's disapprobation, which also, from the necessity of his holiness, must inevitably have been expressed. Hence, therefore, the moral government of God may be said to have no aspect of severity at all; since it creates no additional source of suffering, but merely employs for the purpose of salutary discipline such as already and inevitably exist. These sources of possible suffering exist in the essential holiness of God, and the moral susceptibility of man; facts which cannot be altered, and which, if they were altered, would leave it only to be regretted that either creatures or the Creator had any existence at all.

Upon the question whether it may be wise to adopt a system which involves such hazard of misery, it cannot be too much to say that *we* are incompetent to decide. Both from our limited knowledge and our corrupt selfishness, we are sure to side too warmly with the apparent interest of man, though adverse to the righteous glory of our Maker. It is plain that God has attached a high value to the system of moral probation, since for the sake of it he has thought it worth while to pursue the course we have been contemplating, with all its hazards. Unquestionably he *may be* right; and if we find it difficult as yet to see that he is so, is it not better for us not to set ourselves up in judgment on matters so far beyond our reach, but to wait for further knowledge, and to suspend our verdict until the brighter day, when God will put into our hands, unsealed, the whole volume of his ways, and we shall be far better qualified to read its mysterious lines?

We shall now close this survey of the moral government of God with two or three reflections.

The first relates to our Maker. How infinitely worthy he is to be admired and revered! In a former Essay we have shewn that his personal character is beautiful, and fits him for the supremacy he holds; we now see that the manner in which he occupies his station in that most interesting aspect of it which relates to his conduct towards man, is altogether worthy of himself. Blameless and lovely is his government as well as his nature. When it is complained of by *rebels*, who hate his authority and dread his wrath, it is without

cause; but there is nothing to hinder a *friend* of God from rejoicing in it as holy, excellent, and delightful.

Other reflections relate to ourselves. If we are now the friends of God—we were once his enemies—what a source of shame and regret it may be to us that it was under such a government we rebelled; that we resisted authority so righteous; that we refused obedience so equitable, so obligatory, so powerfully enforced; and that we constrained so beneficial an administration to point against us its terrors! How rich was that mercy which interposed for our rescue from so just a doom; and how strange the pity which places us, notwithstanding all, in the bosom of parental love!

But if some are the friends of God, all are not so. *You*, perhaps, my dear reader, know the contrary. You do not revere his commands; perhaps you do not hear of his government without a rising repugnance, which, if it were put into words, would say, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve him?" But mark your real situation, and the true character of the administration which bears upon you so unwelcomely. He that claims authority over you is the author of your being: does he therein exceed his right, or violate yours? What he requires of you is to mould your feelings towards him and towards your fellow-creatures into proportionate kindness; is this more than you can render, or than he deserves? As persuasives to obey, he tells you of duty and of sin,—of happiness and of misery, intense and eternal; has he herein shewn you sufficient reasons why you should be obedient? If you do not answer in the negative any of these questions, I ask you why it is that you do not obey? Yours is evidently a mere spirit of self-will and resistant pride, without either reason or pretext. You do not choose to be governed; you will be your own Lord: though you admit the authority you repel to be righteous, the law you violate to be equitable, and the motives you despise to be weighty. Then you admit the justice of your own condemnation; and you know in your own conscience, that, when the terrors of God's indignation shall overtake you, you will be as much covered with speechless shame as pierced with fruitless remorse. You perversely constrain a beneficent government to be your destroyer; yet, in your very destruction your Maker will appear without an imputation, as yourself without an excuse. But do you mean to rush upon

such calamities? Have you not been hitherto consoling yourself under an idea that the government of God, according to the ideas given you of it, had something in it unjust, and that it could never really be carried into execution? And, if that fatal delusion is now torn away from you, will you, with your eyes open, rush headlong into ruin?

If, in the language of penitence, you say, "I have sinned, and I will sin no more," we have to caution you against a fallacious hope. It is of the nature of a system of government by law to allow no mercy,—that is to say, no deviation from the statute. It is to be administered, not departed from. Such is God's government. Its essential principle is the treatment of every man according to his works; and the soul that sinneth, therefore, must die, so far as this dispensation is concerned, without reprieve. Should you say that God, as a sovereign, may forgive, and, as a God of infinite benevolence, he surely will forgive, we must remind you, that, in his moral government, sovereignty is restrained by righteousness. Even infinite compassion may not pronounce your pardon, while the voice of righteous judgment demands the execution of the vengeance written; "The soul that sinneth shall die."

Do you now exclaim, "What then becomes of me? Am I shut up in despair?" We answer, Yes: if it were not for an interposition of righteous mercy, as illustrious and unexpected as you are undeserving. But behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! He was God's own Son, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief, and laid on him the chastisement of our peace, that by his stripes we might be healed. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and gave himself for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God; and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Such is the wonderful provision of mercy made for your condition of wretchedness and despair. Bow to it. Rejoice in it. And now, while yet a little longer judgment waits, flee from the wrath to come.

ESSAY VI.

THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL.

When treating in the preceding Essay on God's moral government of man, or that system of requirement, motive, and retribution, within which he has comprehended us, we found it of undoubted adaptation and excellency as applied to man in his primary condition of uprightness; but we were met at two points with a question respecting its applicability to those who have fallen by his iniquity. The inquiries which presented themselves were these: the first, Whether, as Adam's posterity have fallen with him, we are really in the state of personal and independent probation which has been described; the second, Whether, if we are, we do not derive from him an incapacity to improve it. We now resume these questions; not as matters, which they plainly are not, of vain curiosity, but of important practical bearing. Familiar as the fall and its effects are in the mouths of religious persons, the subject is, perhaps, not very clearly understood; and, derided as it has often been by infidels, we yet challenge for it the most rigorous scrutiny.

Let it first be ascertained what is intended by *the fall.* From the only book which professes to conduct us to the origin of the human race, and which we may assume to be as true in that which it relates as we have seen it to be divine in that which it reveals, we learn that mankind commenced in a single pair, and that they were both holy and happy. By listening and yielding to suggestions of evil, they rendered themselves sinful; and thus incurring their Maker's displeasure, they rendered themselves miserable too. In this manner *they fell* from their primary state of holiness and happiness, into one of sin and misery. This is the event familiarly spoken of as the Fall of Man.

It may very reasonably be asked, why this event should be supposed to have any influence upon mankind at large. It is quite conceivable that the effect of their misconduct might be confined to the transgressors themselves; and it may be presumed that this was actually the case, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

Such evidence, we conceive, exists. Not to dwell upon the circumstance that in all cases it is hard for children to escape from sharing the consequences of a parent's fault, we may notice the manifest fact that the children of Adam do actually participate in the results of his transgression. Sickness and sorrow, pain and death, were no tenants of this happy earth before Adam sinned; but they entered it immediately afterwards, and claimed their dominion in consequence of his crime. These are the common lot of man, and not of the guilty merely, but of the innocent also; since the newborn babe meets them at the very threshold of life, inhaling them with his first breath, and throwing into the first sounds he utters the language of woe. The world is in this state of sorrow simply because our first parent sinned; and we, in thus suffering, share the consequences of his wrong.

But to go further than this. We conceive that, at the time when Adam ate the forbidden fruit, an arrangement had been made with him by his Maker, according to which the welfare of his posterity was identified with his own, and suspended on his conduct; so that, if he had been faithful in the point in which he was then tried, all his descendants would have been made happy for the sake of his fidelity, while all should participate likewise in the consequences of his failure.

That such an arrangement did exist may be gathered from the fact just noticed, that we actually share the effects of his fall. For, on what ground of equity is it conceivable that evils merited by one man's conduct should be extended to many millions who have not deserved them, unless there have been some such constitution, establishing a connexion for good as well as for evil between the principal and secondary parties? A current of water indicates the existence, not merely of a spring from whence, but of a channel through which, it flows; nor can less be said of a current of sorrow. Under the administration of a holy sovereign, it can reach no object not united by an equitable connexion with the fountain whence it springs. If infidels can assign any other explanation of this world's woe, it is high time that they did so.

The testimony of divine revelation, however, sets this question entirely at rest. We readily admit that the Mosaic narrative of the transaction with our first parents is less express and communicative respecting the import of it than the later writers of the New Testament are; but we do not

see that this at all invalidates the interpretation they have given us, or that it is out of keeping with the general character of the sacred records. Matters of doctrine are uniformly explained more largely in the New Testament than in the Old. Refer, therefore, to the epistle to the Romans, v. 12–21. The whole of this passage proceeds upon the principle that, in the divine ways, such a connexion was established between Adam and his posterity that they should be treated according to his deserts, irrespectively of their own; just such a connexion, in fact, as that which God has established between Christ and sinners, by which we know that they, upon believing in him, are to be treated according to *his* deserts, irrespectively of their own. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The same principle appears in the words, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Although the derivation of *evil* is the only thing mentioned in these passages, as it is the only thing which has occurred in fact, it would be altogether unreasonable to suppose that God had established a connexion for evil apart from a connexion for good; but if scriptural proof of that point should be required, I conceive it may be found where the apostle runs the parallel between the progenitor and the Redeemer of mankind to such a length as to call the Lord Jesus Christ "the second Adam;" a name which could scarcely have been thus applied, if no benefits had been intended to result to Adam's posterity from his obedience. No doubt, I conceive, can be entertained, but that the first man's fidelity in his brief and gentle trial would have secured the spiritual and eternal welfare of his descendants in every age.

Our first parent, however, was not faithful. He fell; and, if he stood as our representative, we, of course, fell in him and with him. When we inquire after the effects of his fall upon ourselves, some of them are obvious. We have lost that happiness which his steadfastness would have gained for us; we are suffering a variety of evils which entered into the world by his transgression; and we find in ourselves, and in others universally, a disordered state of mind, such as his became after he had fallen. And thus we come to the important questions with which we set out: namely, first, whether we are not so involved in Adam's fall as to be

subject to divine wrath on account of his crime; and, secondly, whether we do not derive from him an incapacity for the fulfilment of our duty, or for the effective improvement of an opportunity of salvation. Let us pursue these topics with a careful and independent regard to the Oracles of God.

Our first inquiry is, whether we are not so involved in our first parent's fall, as to be subject to divine wrath on account of his transgression.

Some divines have maintained the affirmative of this question. It has been explicitly held, that, on account of Adam's sin, and by virtue of the covenant of Eden, all men were and are subjected to eternal perdition; that on this ground many infants are already in a state of suffering, and that all would be so, if it were not for such special exceptions as God in his sovereign mercy may have been pleased to make. It would certainly be a matter greatly to be lamented if any institution of our heavenly Father's wisdom should run to such deplorable results; but, before such a conclusion is admitted, a few considerations may deserve regard.

Even admitting that the effect of the covenant of Eden would have been to include all the posterity of Adam with himself in eternal misery, this could have resulted only in the case of his having posterity, which it does not necessarily follow that he would have if he sinned. On the contrary, it appears that, in case of transgression, he would certainly have no descendants: because the threatening was, "*In the day that thou eatest* thou shalt surely die." If that covenant had been carried into full operation, therefore, Adam would have died childless, and would thus have perished alone. This circumstance, which appears to me to be fully established by the terms of the narrative, is highly worthy of regard, as shewing that, while multitudes would have been brought into being to receive the benefit of Adam's fidelity, he was to be the only victim of his sin. Such was the wisdom and goodness of God herein. The advantage would have spread widely, and have been perpetuated from age to age; but the mischiefs, if mischief arose, were thus to have been destroyed in the bud, and the fountain of evil to have been dried up as soon as it was opened.

It is true that Adam has had posterity, and that, though fallen, he has multiplied his descendants on the earth; and

it might seem, therefore, that all must be under the curse of the broken covenant of Eden: but the very fact that mankind have multiplied is a proof that that covenant is not in operation, since, if it had been, the parents must have died ere a child could have been born. Now, if the covenant be not in operation, its curses must be powerless; they can have no force but by virtue of the system to which they belong, and, if that is superseded, they are laid aside with it.

That the continuance of Adam's life was owing to the setting aside of the covenant of paradise, and the introduction of a new dispensation, is abundantly manifest from the sacred narrative. The threatening of immediate death was positive, and could not have been remitted but in consideration of an atonement graciously accepted in the transgressor's stead. We find accordingly, that, before a word was said to the criminals, in what God said to the serpent an annunciation was given of the woman's seed, who should bruise the serpent's head, and undo the mischief he had wrought. This was telling them at once, that, through sovereign goodness, the penalty which they had incurred was actually remitted; that they should live, and see their forfeited progeny arise, and among them the deliverer. The joy with which this unexpected intelligence was received was manifest in the exultation with which Adam named his wife *Eve*, "because," said he, "she shall be the mother of many living." To this it may be added, that the evils which God pronounced on the first transgressors not only were far short of the penalty which had been incurred, but were altogether in harmony with the new state of merciful discipline and hope. Now if the sentence of the paradisaic covenant was actually remitted as to Adam himself, how is it conceivable that it should remain in force as to his posterity? They surely must have the benefit of that new dispensation under which alone they could have come into existence.

According to the system of divine administration which was thus introduced, man is no longer treated with any reference to the transactions in Eden. As our first parent by his transgression lost, of course, the benefits of that covenant, so God in his mercy has remitted the penalty; and there it ends. This system not having been replaced by any of a similar character, man now falls back upon the general administration of God's moral government, which,

as we have observed in a former Essay, must be conceived to have been established prior to the arrangements in the garden of Eden. He recurs to the primary and unchangeable obligation of loving his Creator with all his heart and his fellow-creatures as himself, and to the system of motive and retribution of which it is the basis. Being also a transgressor of this law, he is thus, indeed, subject to a new and abiding condemnation; but for this, likewise, the dispensation of grace provides a remedy. In the victim whose blood was shed ere he was driven out of the forfeited paradise, the first transgressor beheld "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and, in being divinely clothed with the skin of the slain, he had a vivid emblem of that righteousness "which is unto all and upon all them that believe."

It remains to add, that the new dispensation essentially deals with men *for themselves*, and not for others. Adam now stood, not as a representative for his posterity, but as a creature and a sinner for himself. If he were righteous or repentant, none but himself could be benefited; if he were wicked and impenitent, none but himself should suffer for his crime.

Precisely such we conceive to be the condition of every man, since such is the character of the dispensation under which alone mankind exist. Of course, this argument supposes the work of Christ, which is the entire basis of the dispensation of mercy, to have, not a partial, but a universal reference. Those who hold that Christ did not in any sense die for the whole world, but that his death was in all its aspects of benefit confined to the elect, may reasonably hesitate to come to the conclusion we are endeavouring to establish. If there be any, whether infants or others, for whom Christ did not die, then they of course must remain under their first father's curse, since it is only by virtue of Christ's death that this ever can be remitted. Not here to repeat the inquiry how such persons came to exist, it may be sufficient to observe the unquestionable proofs that, in whatever sense Christ has died more especially for the elect, he has died really for all men. Such, for example, is the express testimony of the apostle, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." It seems natural that the word *all*, in the two clauses of this sentence, should be inter-

preted in the same latitude; but if any attempt should be made to limit it in the latter case, and to say that only all the elect, or all believers, are made alive by Christ, a reference to the context will settle the question. The apostle is speaking of the resurrection of the body—not of the resurrection of the righteous, but of the resurrection of the dead generally, both of the righteous and the wicked; and with great justice he ascribes this victory over death, for such in both cases it is, to the work of Christ. "As by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Here is a point in which all men actually partake of the fruits of Christ's death, and a proof that he died for all men. As another familiar instance of the same thing may be mentioned the long-suffering which God exercises towards all men, while their sins not only deserve, but, according to the principles of righteousness, demand, and ought to constrain, their immediate punishment. Upon what principle of justice is it that a sinner is permitted to multiply his iniquities year after year, even to hoary hairs? Plainly upon none, but upon a system of mercy; and, since no mercy is or can be exercised but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, it follows that, as all men are treated mercifully, so he must have died for all. And thus indeed it is written, in terms which nothing but the supposed necessity of maintaining a different sentiment could pervert: "For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The work of Christ thus having reference to mankind universally, it affects the condition of every descendant of Adam just as it affected his own. It is an extensive under-plat, which is placed beneath the whole ruined race, and which constitutes a new ground on which every man may stand, freely and firmly, for trial and for hope.

If we should here be reminded of what we have already said respecting our actual participation in the bitter fruits of the first transgression, and be asked how, if the curse of the Eden covenant be remitted, any of its contents remain, the question would certainly be a heedless one; since it would overlook the obvious fact that the evils referred to are felt by the saints, concerning whom it will, we suppose, be admitted that the curse is cancelled, as well as by other men.

If it can be explained in the one case, no difficulty can exist in the other. The simple truth is, that the evils which we now suffer because of Adam's sin are not laid on us penally, or as of the nature of punishment, but beneficially, for the purpose of salutary discipline. Affliction is chastisement, not destruction; correction, not condemnation; kindness, not wrath. This is the view uniformly taken of earthly ills, so far as God is their author or their manager, in the sacred volume; and it corresponds with the obvious tendency which they have to produce conviction, to induce reflection, and to awaken salutary emotions. That God, who, in his sovereign mercy, cancelled the curse, was at liberty to retain such of its contents as could be made subservient to the purposes of mercy, can admit of no doubt; and that he has retained no other portion of them, is a clear proof that the curse is cancelled, not in name only, but in reality.

We now see nothing more to detain us from our conclusion, which is, that, though we have fallen in Adam our head, through the new dispensation which God has introduced we are not under the curse of the covenant he broke. No man is subject to the wrath of God, in any sense or degree, because of Adam's sin; but every man stands as free from the penal influences of his first parent's crime as though Adam had never existed, or as though he himself were the first of mankind. Having, through our progenitor's unfaithfulness, derived from the covenant of Eden no benefit, we suffer under it no punishment. In these respects that system is to our whole race as though it had never been. Henceforward we are dealt with by our Maker according to the rules of his moral government, which, in the preceding Essay, we have described at large. The dispensation which cancelled the covenant which had been broken, restored man, and all his kind, to the exclusive operation of that primary government under which every man is to receive according to his works. From this view of things we derive the most cheering confidence of the happiness of all, without exception, who die in infancy; while those who live to moral agency become open to the calls, and motives, and issues, presented to us in the Scriptures.

Let us now proceed to our second inquiry, namely, whether, if, notwithstanding the fall, we are placed in a state of probation, we do not derive from our first parent an incapacity to fulfil its duties.

That, ever since the transgression of our first parents, the mind of man has been in a state widely different from its original condition, is a fact to which history, observation, and consciousness bear a combined and uniform testimony. The invariable fact that every human creature who lives long enough to act under moral motives disregards and violates them, demonstrates but too clearly that the whole race is depraved; and since the stream of corruption can be traced so distinctly up to the common father, it seems inevitable to conclude that the mischief originated with him, and descends from him. It is doubtless because we are his children that we bear his likeness. After this statement, however, it is fair to ask, what is the amount of the evil? It is plain that man still exists, though injured: what extent of injury has he sustained? If, indeed, the fact is, that we have so severely suffered as to be now incapable of fulfilling our duty, it is deeply to be deplored; and the more so, because it involves the government of our Maker in so painful an inconsistency with all notions which we are competent to form of goodness or of equity. We would certainly prefer not to find him, like a hard master, requiring impossibilities. But let the question be fairly examined.

And in the outset let it be observed, that the question is not whether men, as fallen, *will or will not* fulfil their duty; whether they have or have not an inclination towards it. We not only admit, but maintain, the entire aversion of man to his Maker. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and will never seek reconciliation, or cherish friendship. Nothing can be more express than the scripture testimony to this effect. But whether fallen man is willing to fulfil his duty is one question, whether he is capable of doing so is another; and the latter is the question now before us.

Now this may be considered, in the first place, as a matter of fact, and may be determined by an examination of the powers which fallen man actually retains. Let us try this method.

We have seen that the duty of man under God's moral government, is to produce and maintain love to his Maker supremely, and to his fellow-creatures subordinately; that is to say, he is called upon in a prescribed manner to regulate his feelings. When we examined the nature and capacity of man, we found that his power of regulating his feelings arose

out of two facts in his constitution: the first, that his feelings always correspond with the direction and intensity of his thoughts; the second, that he is capable of selecting the subjects of his thoughts, and of giving them any intensity. If these things be so, then it is plain that by this machinery man can regulate his feelings. We have to ask, therefore, whether fallen man, as he is in substance before our eyes, has lost both or either of these properties. If he has, I admit that by the fall he has lost all capacity for fulfilling his duty; but if he has not, his capacity obviously remains. But it will not be pretended for a moment that in man as he now exists either of these properties is destroyed. Every man can still choose what he will think upon, and with how much force he will think upon it; and still does the state of every man's feelings accord with the direction and the intensity of his thoughts. If, therefore, man's power of regulating his feelings does consist in what we have described, it is obvious as a matter of fact that it has not been destroyed by the fall. If the contrary is to be maintained, it must plainly be by affirming that something besides the machinery described is necessary to constitute such a capacity; what this might be it would be necessary for any person who would undertake the argument to show, and the discussion would thus be removed to the previous ground of the original nature and capacity of man.

Whether by the fall man has lost his capacity for fulfilling his duty, may be considered, secondly, as a matter of testimony; and may be determined by a reference to the Oracles of God. Let these also be consulted.

On this point it may reasonably be said that the burden of proof does not lie upon us. That man, though fallen, is still able to fulfil his duty, is most natural to be supposed, and may be assumed as the sentiment of the Sacred Oracles, although not expressly asserted, unless they affirm the contrary. That man should by the fall have been rendered incapable of his duty, is the fact which, if it exists, requires proof; and if satisfactory proof of it cannot be adduced, the contrary position is true of course, and unquestionable.

What, then, is the scriptural evidence on behalf of the sentiment that mankind, as fallen, have not a capacity equal to their duty? Does such a sentiment lie at the foundation of scriptural appeals to them? Does a righteous God refrain

from commanding their service, and from blaming their disobedience, and thus authorize us to conclude that they have no power? Far from it. The Bible deals as freely in precepts and exhortations as it possibly could if men had the most extensive powers ever belonging to their nature, and evidently founds its appeals upon the principle that they actually possess them. Here, therefore, at all events, is no evidence to the contrary. From what part of the Word of God, then, is such evidence derived?

It is supposed to be found in those passages which declare that we *cannot* do any thing good. It ought to be recollected, however, that with equal force the same writings declare that we *will not*. Here then are two representations of one and the same matter. What are we to do with them? We ask in the first place whether they both are, or can be, literally true. To us it appears that this is impossible; not, indeed, because a man may not be both unable and unwilling to perform a given action, but because, when a man is unable, though he may also be unwilling, his unwillingness cannot reasonably be represented as *the cause* of his refusal. But unwillingness is strongly put as *the cause* why men do not come to Christ, and they themselves are accordingly severely censured; which could not justly be the case if power also were wanting.

Then, if both these representations be not literally true, one of them must be metaphorical, and must be so understood as to harmonize with the other. Which of them can be so modified in accordance with the Scriptures? Shall we take the latter, and say, that, when Christ declares men *will not* come to him that they might have life, he does not mean it literally, but only figuratively; that they really would if they could, only they actually cannot? Besides the difficulty of imagining any other than a literal meaning for the term *will not*, it is manifest that such an interpretation would be wholly inconsistent with the inspired testimony of the wickedness of man. We must therefore take the other phrase, and say, that when our Lord declares men *cannot* come to him he does not mean it literally, but figuratively; that they can come to him, but that their unwillingness is so extreme as to produce the same effect as though they could not. The two representations thus harmonize with each other, and with the whole of the divine Word, and therefore this interpretation may be considered as just.

If it be just, however, mark what follows. The Scriptures, then, do not teach that fallen man cannot fulfil his duty, since they use this term only in a figurative, and not in a literal sense. It might as well be maintained that according to the Scriptures God is literally a shield or a tower. What they affirm is, simply, that men will not.

Some other expressions in the Bible have been taken to denote a want of capacity for our duty; as when men are said to be "blind," or "dull of hearing," or more especially "dead in trespasses and sins." If these passages are to be understood literally, I submit to the conclusion drawn from them. But on this point I might ask, how blindness can literally belong to a being which has no organ of sight, (for I never heard that the soul had any,) and some other questions, which may perhaps be spared, as it will probably be allowed that the expressions referred to are figurative. But if so, then they do not denote the absence of capacity, for that is their literal and not their figurative meaning; what they denote figuratively is, not the want of capacity, but the non-employment of it.

If the Scriptures, then, afford no proof that man, though fallen, is destitute of capacity for his duty, that sentiment of course falls to the ground. None, even of its warmest advocates, will pretend that it is to be received without evidence, or that there are any other sources from which evidence of it can be derived besides those we have consulted, namely, Scripture and fact. We need not, therefore, trouble ourselves further. An unsupported dogma calls for no refutation; like a fabric without a foundation, it must fall by its own weight. The conclusion, then, to which we come on this branch of our subject is, that, neither in fact nor according to the Scriptures, has man by the fall lost his capacity for the discharge of his duty.

In maintaining this truth, we are by no means concerned to affirm that the powers of man generally are now in their original strength. It may be admitted, that neither in body nor mind is apostate man equal to his innocent progenitor; and, if it should be alleged that our active powers and our capacity of self-government have suffered in the general shock, though we do not know that the last item could be proved, yet that also may be allowed. For it is a remarkable feature in the divine administration, and one not suffi-

ciently regarded, that the law of God absolutely accommodates its requirements to the actual strength of man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy strength*," is the whole of its demand. If, therefore, the case be so that man, as a fallen creature, has less strength to love God than as an innocent one, the law still makes an equitable requirement of him. Not beyond his strength, though with all the strength he has, is he to love his Maker. The question, consequently, whether man's capacity is enfeebled by the fall is not of the slightest moment. The important point is, whether any capacity remains; a point on which both Scripture and facts authorize us to maintain the affirmative with confidence.

If it should be conceived that the view now taken does not allow the injury resulting to us from the fall to be sufficiently great, we might reply by saying, that we must abide by the Word of God rather than follow the imaginings of men. It is neither impossible nor improbable that we may form incorrect or exaggerated ideas of the effects of the first transgression on ourselves, in a direction tending to relieve us from a sense of obligation and of peril. Man is too selfish to be trusted in such a case. If other or greater mischief can by Scripture be shewn to have arisen, we shall be far from gainsaying the proof of it; but if not, it is better for us to rectify sentiments which, in this case, must be both inaccurate and pernicious.

In reply to such an objection, however, we might say further, that it proceeds upon an erroneous view of that by which alone a human being can be really degraded or depraved. In order to shew that we have suffered a deep and melancholy injury by the fall, it is necessary, in the opinion of this objector, to maintain that it has destroyed *one of our capacities*, namely, our capacity of doing our duty; and this seems to him not only a much greater evil than the loss of a bias to holiness, but the only great mischief we can possibly suffer. Now it really seems that the question which of these two mischiefs is the greater, may be safely left to the decision of any man of common understanding. Which is the higher excellency—to have capacities for noble actions, or to have a delight in performing them? Is a mere capacity for good deeds any excellency at all? Does it not rather become a reproach to have such a capacity without a

readiness to employ it; and even an actual means of degradation, when the capacity of good is employed for evil? And, if a bias to good be the only conceivable moral excellency, the loss of such a bias must be the only conceivable moral mischief. A holy bias was, in fact, the only moral excellency of man as created; and the loss of it must have constituted the only moral injury to which he could be liable.

If, indeed, the loss of capacity be looked at in itself, it cannot be regarded as involving degradation of any degree. We are familiar with several cases of its occurrence; as when, for example, a person loses a limb or an eye, and so loses his capacity of sight or of walking; or when a person becomes insane, and so loses his capacity of rational agency. Such an occurrence we consider a great affliction, but no shame; a diminution of the powers of action and enjoyment, but not a matter of ill-desert or dishonour. We should never think of calling it debasement, or depravity; nor do we ever regard it as an occasion of disesteem, but exclusively of commiseration. If by Adam's iniquity we had suffered a loss of capacity, its effect must clearly have been viewed in a similar light. But, as the objector will readily admit, this is not the case. On the contrary, we are said to be "born in *sin*, and shapen in *iniquity*." The state of fallen man is uniformly spoken of as a state of defective righteousness; and we safely conclude, therefore, that its distinguishing feature cannot consist in a loss of capacity.

In truth, the existence of a capacity for good is necessary to any intelligible humiliation for not doing good. If we tell any man that he has not a capacity for a certain action, we can no longer tell him that he ought to be ashamed of himself for not performing it, but we rather exempt him entirely from blame. Those persons, therefore, who profess their desire that man, as a fallen creature, should be abased, and yet say that by the fall he has lost his capacity for duty, involve themselves in a most marvellous inconsistency; and not unfrequently has this inconsistency been evinced by their exclaiming, in the course of argument, "If you have such power to do your duty, what a dreadful sinner you must be not to do it!"—an exclamation from which it is manifest that, in their own view, the tendency of the sentiment they reject is, not merely to abase the transgressor, but to abase him to a much greater extent than they are prepared to allow.

In one word, whoever would shew that man has suffered the deepest debasement by the fall, must allow as little as in truth can be allowed for loss of capacity, and contemplate exclusively the injury sustained in the temper of his mind. The former would be a physical evil, the latter alone is a moral one. The loss of capacity would only reduce man from human towards the brute; the loss of holy bias lowers him from the angel towards the fiend.

At present we pursue this argument no further; but recall the conclusions to which we have come, and mark their bearings on the hearts and consciences of men.

Let it be marked, then, in the first place, that we stand every one of us on trial for ourselves, entirely remote from punishment of any kind or degree for Adam's sin. Perhaps a contrary supposition may heretofore have flung a degree of mystery about our apprehensions of the ways of God. We may have been ready to complain of having to work our escape out of a condition of wrath which our own conduct had not deserved; or we may have comforted ourselves (such comfort as it could have been to us) with the notion that, if we should be condemned at last, it would be more for Adam's sin than for our own. But let such imaginations be for ever dismissed; they have no foundation in Scripture, or in fact. Although children of Adam, our Maker deals with us each for ourselves, and looks upon us with no wrath until our own disobedience deserves it. As his creatures, we all stand under a just obligation to love him; an obligation our compliance with which he enforces by many motives, and our resistance of which he will visit with righteous retribution. Are we giving to this matter the consideration it deserves? Are the issues, awful as they are, duly before us? Have we taken any pains to realize the fact, that our future and eternal state is suspended simply and absolutely upon our own choice? Have we deeply pondered the truth that ours is an independent and personal probation, the issue of which will not in any measure be influenced by the desert of Adam's conduct, but solely by the desert of our own? Do we seriously reflect that our final condition is not made for us, but that we have to construct it ourselves, and that we inevitably are constructing it by our present conduct, whatever the course of it may be? Let us not be deceived. "God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

And if this is not a state of things concerning which we should suffer ourselves to be deceived, neither is it one in which we should allow ourselves to slumber. If there is any man who ought to be awake and active, it is not so much he who has appetites to satisfy, wealth to acquire, or earthly projects to accomplish, as he who has to create his future destiny, and write his own everlasting doom. Say, dear reader—it is for you, and for you alone, to say—is it for heaven, or for hell?

Let it be marked, secondly, that the fall of our first parent has not destroyed our capacity for fulfilling the obligation which is pressed upon us. All that the Lord requires of us *we can do.* The whole of his demand is that we should mould our feelings to a state corresponding with the motives he has set before us; and the due consideration of those motives will infallibly accomplish the end. See, therefore, reader, the reasonableness and the righteousness of God's administration. See the necessity of activity and exertion on your part, if you are to escape a condemnation, not only terrible, but just. You would rather sleep it may be, at least in reference to the objects of an eternal world, and yield yourself without interruption to the attractions and occupations of the present. If you could only persuade yourself that you had not the ability to perform that upon which your ultimate condition is represented as depending, and that, do what you might, your lot would be the same, as long ago determined by an all-controlling and resistless hand, then you would seem justified in sleeping. But if what you have read is true, you cannot do this. The whole law of God you have power to obey; and necessarily so, since he makes your power the very measure of his demand. Be inactive, therefore, if you are resolved upon it; but acknowledge that the ruin which will follow will be achieved by your own hand. Blame no one but yourself for your eternal sufferings. Anticipate no possibility of complaining against God that he demanded too much, or that he visits your disobedience with unequal retribution. It is not he who is unjust, it is you who are heedless and perverse.

The principle which establishes your capacity to obey the law of God demonstrates the criminality of your disobedience. That you have not kept it, of course, you are well aware; and, since you could have kept it, how guilty is your

neglect! How groundless is the spirit of self-excuse, perhaps I might say of self-justification, with which you have often regarded your conduct! What shame and confusion of face ought henceforth to cover you! What contrition for the wrong you have done to your Maker, what alarm for the equal wrong you have inflicted on your own soul! With what speed you should fly, if for so great a criminal there is hope, to the fountain which is opened for sin, and to the footstool of him by whom the chief of sinners may be saved!

ESSAY VII.

A FUTURE STATE.

In a preceding Essay we have seen how God, the universal parent, has been pleased to become also the moral governor of mankind. Upon his paternal relation to us he founds the requirements of his law, by a thousand just and touching motives he persuades us to obedience, and he will hereafter examine and recompense the manner in which his appeals may have been regarded; glory, honour, and immortality being allotted to every one that worketh good, but to every one that doeth evil indignation and wrath. At this point we have paused, to consider whether a system so manifestly applicable to man in his original condition could be regarded as bearing upon him in that secondary, and undoubtedly altered condition, which resulted from the transgression of our first parent; and here we have found reason to believe that, while, on the one hand, the depravity consequent upon the fall has left unbroken our capacity for obedience to the divine law, the interposition of mercy, on the other, has placed us all in a state of independent individual probation, without any liability to punishment on account of our first parent's iniquity. We now, therefore, return to the subject of that moral government which we have before described, and resume those aspects of it which require a more particular scrutiny.

Some of the principal motives by which our Maker en-

forces his authority are drawn from the future; and not from a distant period of our present life, but from a life itself to come. Thus, as it is appointed to men once to die, so after death is the judgment, when every man shall receive according to his works, and the grand retribution of human conduct be accomplished.

We thus arrive at the sentiment that death is not the termination of our existence, but that there is a life beyond it; since, if it be not so, all such appeals are unintelligible and absurd. Now the doctrine of a future state has been the subject of much cavil, and of occasional denial. Some men have affirmed that there is no hereafter, and more have wished that there were none; while many consign the sentiment to regions of doubt and uncertainty, as one upon which nothing positive can be said, and to which no tangibility or impressiveness can be given. Let us take up this subject, therefore, and see whether it deserves to be thus easily thrown aside.

I will not detain my reader by dwelling on the remark, that a man who denies a future state sets himself in opposition to the general consent and belief of mankind; although it is a fact well worthy of observation, that all nations in all ages have, in methods more or less disfigured by their own inventions, entertained such a belief, because it is difficult to conceive how an idea should become universally prevalent, unless it is founded in truth. Nor will I pause to insist on the strangeness of such a denial; although it might be said with great justice that the denial of a future state is strange, since it exhibits a man renouncing his highest dignity and his amplest prospects. When a human being is told that, though he must shortly die, he may yet live, and shall live for ever, one would expect the tidings to be hailed with rapture; and, if there be those who can find gratification in rejecting it, we can scarcely err in believing that it is chiefly because they apprehend a future existence would bring little happiness *to them*. Without dwelling on these topics, however, we admit that an opponent has a right to put us to the proof; and we admit also, that no authoritative stress is to be laid on the general consent of mankind, or on any other evidence except that of divine revelation. It is to this we make our appeal as "bringing to light life and immortality;" and we do so with satisfaction, I presume, to our opponents

as well as ourselves, inasmuch as we have already settled with them the claims to the character of a divine revelation which the sacred volume possesses.

What, then, is the testimony which the Scriptures bear in relation to a future state?

Here let us attend, in the first place, to the general evidence which the Scriptures afford of the existence of a different state of being from our own. And surely a decisive proof of this may be derived from the fact, that many of the motives which God has addressed to us are drawn from such a state. When our Maker represents to us the joys and sorrows of another world in order to influence our conduct in this, it is not only a natural, but an inevitable conclusion, that the world of which he speaks is a reality, and not a fiction. To suppose that he would use as motives things which have no existence, would be to cast an awful imputation upon himself, and to reduce his word to the level of a fraud.

In addition to this, we have various instances upon record in which communication between the two worlds has actually taken place. Visitants from the invisible state have made their appearance on earth with no inconsiderable frequency; and, in conjunction with these "ministering spirits," God himself, the supreme ruler of it, has occasionally honoured our world with his presence too. The angelic band, of course, have a residence and a home; and that residence is the world of which we speak. Besides, beings from the visible world have been known to enter into that which is unseen. I do not refer to those who have died, and whom the impugner of a future state might suppose to have perished, but to those who have departed from the present state without dying. Such was the case with Enoch, who "was not, for God took him;" and who was known at the time to have been taken to a different state of existence, as a testimony "that he pleased God." Such also was the case with Elijah, who was visibly transported from the earth by "the chariot of God and the horsemen thereof." The latter of these prophets, Elijah, subsequently re-appeared in this world, when he stood with our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of three of his disciples, on the mount of his transfiguration. Nor is an instance of the same kind wanting in the New Testament history. Paul, as he informs us in his

second epistle to the Corinthians, was "caught up to the third heaven," or, as he states afterwards, "into paradise," where he "heard words which it was not possible to repeat." To this it may be added, that, as our Lord Jesus Christ was seen to go away into heaven, so he has repeatedly since that time appeared again upon earth. Now, upon the supposition that there is no other state of existence than the present, all this is perfectly unintelligible. These facts, indeed, open to us evidences of the existence of another state as decisive as they are magnificent and beautiful.

Man, however, generally dies; and our opponent may allege that death, when it does occur, actually terminates the existence of man. But let us hear the word of the Lord on this point. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Eccl. xii. 7. That the spirit's "returning to God who gave it" imports its continued existence, appears from another passage in the same book (chap. iii. 21); "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Here the "going downward to the earth" plainly denotes the extinction of the brute spirit, in opposition to the continued existence of the human. To the same point we may apply the argument drawn by our Lord from the customary phrase by which God is called "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob;" seeing that, as God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living," it follows that they still live, while their bodies are in the grave. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.) establishes the same point. Here both of these persons are seen in heaven and hell respectively, during the time that the five brethren of the rich man are pursuing their course of wickedness, and, indeed, immediately upon their departure from the body. Decisive on the same topic is the language of the apostle concerning his own anticipations. "I have a desire to depart," says he, "and to be with Christ, which is far better." And again, "We are always courageous; knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." That his sentiments on this subject did not apply only to himself, appears from his epistle to the Hebrews, in which he speaks generally of "the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. xii. 23.) One of

these perfected spirits appeared in vision to the beloved disciple (Rev. xix. 10), and said, "I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus."

But, while the Scriptures thus amply testify that the soul of man prolongs its existence in defiance of the stroke of death, it may be alleged that, at all events, the body is reduced to irrecoverable decay, and that man, as man, a compound of soul and body, can exist no more. Upon this point, therefore, let us hear a third time the Oracles of God. "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands." (Job xiv. 14, 15.) The plain reference of this passage is to the state of the body subsequently to its death; and its import is, as plainly, that at the "appointed time" God will raise it from the dead. In the same book, (chap. xix. 25, 26,) we have the well-known words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and that though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

This is the language of the Old Testament; let us now examine the New. The doctrine of the resurrection was expressly taught by our Lord. "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." (John vi. 40; v. 25, 26.) Those who denied the resurrection Christ in his day reproved for their error, as "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." The doctrine which he taught on this subject was illustrated by his deeds; for, on more than one occasion, the dead were actually raised to life at his word. The same truth was at length exemplified in his own person, when he himself rose triumphantly from the tomb; and in the persons of the numerous sleeping saints who arose in conjunction with him, "and appeared unto many." We find the apostles inculcating this doctrine, amidst the ridicule of the schools and the terrors of the stake. At Athens Paul "preached

unto them Jesus and the resurrection," though the men of boasted wisdom "mocked" at the tidings which "this babbler" brought them; and, when accused before Felix, he confessed his "hope toward God," as allowed likewise by his adversaries, "that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts xvii. 18; xxiv. 15.) I will conclude the evidence on this topic by referring to the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, where the same apostle most closely argues the question, and produces a conclusion of the most magnificent kind. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man is come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; and death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed." (1 Cor. xv. 20–26.)

Such, then, is the inspired testimony that there is a state of being distinct from that which is at present ours; and that, notwithstanding death, there is a future life for us. What has the sceptic to say to this evidence?

If he refuses to yield to the authority of the Divine Word, he removes the argument to a different field, and betakes himself to ground which we have already trodden with him, and cannot now tread over again. To have once satisfied ourselves of the claims of divine revelation is enough for any honest man, without suffering every unwelcome truth to renew our doubts.

If he should pretend that the doctrine of a future state, had it been anciently received, should have been placed among the sanctions of the Mosaic law, we supply an answer. First, the fact that a future state was known in the very earliest ages is demonstrated by the translation of Enoch, intended as it is declared to have been for a testimony of God's approbation; for, if he had been merely missed, and it had not been known what had become of him, his removal could not have answered this purpose. The book of Job, also, which, as we have seen, distinctly contains the doctrine, proves it to have been held in later patriarchal times, and probably in the very age of Moses himself. Secondly, the absence of all reference to a future state among the sanctions of the Jewish law, far from being any cause of surprise or ground of objection, is in perfect harmony with its character. That law consisted entirely of "carnal ordinances," and could

not with propriety have been enforced by any but temporal motives. Judaism was not religion. It demanded no spiritual duty, and it could not connect itself with spiritual or eternal results. The unhappy tenacity with which divines have ascribed a religious character to the Jewish economy, has put into the mouths of infidels all they have had to say on this subject. We acknowledge that the doctrine of a future state, like many others, has been eminently "brought to light" by later revelations; but, in this respect, it has only partaken in common of that brilliant glory which, in these last days, has been poured on all objects relating to the spiritual welfare of mankind.

If the sceptic should allege that the scriptural doctrine of a future state is contrary to reason and philosophy, (what poor guides are reason and philosophy in such a case!) we should unhesitatingly deny his assertion. Though reason and philosophy might have been utterly unable to substantiate, or even to discover it, the doctrine of a future state, now it is discovered, is in perfect and delightful harmony with them. Or if there be any contradiction, let it be pointed out. Let the impugner of the sentiment tell us what evidence arises from his researches into the nature of matter and spirit to convince him that the soul must die with the body, and cannot exist without it. If he does not believe that spirits do exist without bodies, his creed annihilates the whole race of angelic beings, and even the Deity himself. And if other spirits can exist apart from matter, why not man's? If it were left to mere reason, and we did not know the fact, it might seem much more rational to doubt the conjunct existence of matter and spirit than their separate existence, and much more easy to prove that a spirit could not act *with* a body, than that it could not act without one.

Or let the sceptic say by what process it can be shewn to be impossible that the body of man should be made to resume its vital functions, when they had once ceased. The philosophers of this age may justly have proposed to them the question which silenced the objectors of a former—"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" If those who deny the resurrection err, on the one hand, by "not knowing the Scriptures," they err no less on the other by their ignorance of "the power of God."

Or let us be told what the principles of our intelligent nature are with which the notion of a future state of existence is at war. Can it be affirmed that it is a sentiment which meets with no kindred faculty, which kindles no appropriate feeling, which is adapted to no beneficial effect? The very contrary of all this is notoriously the fact. The idea of a future life is one which our minds, formed as they are for anticipation, and to feel in futurity a present interest, receive most readily, and with instantaneous power. The light of revelation presents to us but the very hopes for which in the darkness of nature we had been pining, and finds us ready to spring forward to the possession of the whole region of which the prospect is opened to our view. Its adaptation to our nature is an eminent confirmation of its truth, and entitles it to be hailed by sound reason and enlightened philosophy as an inestimable acquisition to their treasures.

If, once more, the sceptic should complain of the mystery which hangs over the life to come, and of the ignorance in which we are held of its practical details, we join with him in acknowledging our ignorance, but we cannot draw from it his conclusion. We admit that is difficult, if not impossible, while we are in the body, to conceive of the modes of action of disembodied spirits, and, while we are in this world, to detail the employments of the next; but we cannot see why our ignorance of these things should lead to the rejection of a truth so well established as the existence of a future state itself. It is making a bad use of our ignorance to render it a pretext for diminishing our knowledge. And if our opponent will not believe that there is any other state than the present because he cannot comprehend other modes of existence than his own, to carry out his principle he must no longer believe that the wind blows or the trees blossom, since he is equally ignorant of the methods of both.

We conclude, therefore, that the existence of a future state is sufficiently established; and proceed, in the second place, to collect those general ideas of its nature which the Sacred Scriptures afford.

Our existence hereafter will be characterized by spirituality. I refer here to the condition of the body, which, although truly raised from the dead, and the same body which it ever has been, will be greatly modified. To this effect we have

the express testimony of the apostle, (1 Cor. xv. 50, 42, 44,) "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. . . . It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." There seems to be no ground for referring this passage to the saints only, either from the scope of the argument, or from the nature of the case; indeed, it is quite as necessary to conceive that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of wrath, as that they cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. We conceive the sentiment to apply to the raised body of man universally. It will be not a natural body, but a spiritual body. Not the body transformed into a spirit, but rendered suitable to a world of spirits, and to all the modes in which spirits act. The precise nature of the change which this expression indicates it is, of course, impossible to ascertain: but, as it would seem, on the one hand, to involve the idea that every thing heavy and cumbrous will be done away, as well as every thing adapted to limit the activity of the soul; so, on the other, it may lead to a belief that such parts and members of the body as are fitted only to purposes of the present life, and will no longer have any objects to serve, will be entirely wanting. The apostle's general principle, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body," seems to divide the body into two separable portions, and to indicate that whatever is "natural" may be removed, without impairing the reality or the identity of the body itself.

The future state will be characterized by great expansion of powers. It does not appear that the intelligent constitution of man will undergo any change as to its nature, or its mode of operation. So far as the mental process is concerned, we shall perceive and reflect, we shall feel and determine, on the same principles as we do at present; but all with much greater vigour and intensity. Decisive indications of this are to be found in the force, and even vehemence, which is thrown into the scriptural representations of the future condition of men. It is not described in simple language taken from the realities of the present life, but in metaphors taken from the most striking objects, and of the utmost possible strength. Their happiness is *life;* their misery *death.* The

former is *glory, crowns,* a *kingdom;* the latter *torment, fire, worms.* The former utters itself in songs and everlasting joy; the latter in weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Such language is clearly meant to describe something far exceeding either the pains or pleasures of mortality.

This sentiment is in perfect harmony with the circumstances of the case. When we consider that the soul is a spirit, it becomes obvious that it is capable in its own nature of much more extended and vigorous action than it now performs. As a spirit, it could discern and converse with spirits, and act with the force and velocity of a spirit; and although the body furnishes its present means of perception and operation, the actual effect of this conjunction is, not to augment the capabilities of the soul, but to limit them. The body being suited only to an earthly state, it prevents the powers of the soul from coming into action except in as far as they are adapted to a similar condition. It contracts the sphere of our vision to regions which the eye can command; it limits the objects we pursue to the competency of an arm of flesh; and it restrains our very emotions within the dimensions which a feeble body can sustain. We have many proofs that the soul is capable of feelings much more intense than the body can bear; inasmuch as emotions of alarm, and even of joy, have occasionally overcome the mortal frame, not only to faintness, but to death. It is manifest, therefore, that nothing more than the mere occurrence of death is needful to an immediate expansion of the mental powers, as when an elastic spring escapes from the pressure by which it had been closely confined.

While liberation from this earthly clod thus enables the freed spirit to assume the full use of its powers, their vigorous and proportionate action will be called forth by its immediate proximity to the glories of the unseen world. If our spiritual capabilities had not been restricted on earth, they would have found no objects adequate to engage them. They would have resembled the powers of a giant thrown away upon the labours of ordinary men, or those of mature age squandered amidst the occupations of children. But the case is different when a man has entered on the world to come. There, if his eye is fully open, he finds objects that fix all his regard; if his emotions are intense, he finds occasions worthy of their utmost power; if his actions are vigorous, he finds pursuits

which demand all his strength. To be, in such a state, fettered with bodily infirmity, would be as great an impropriety on one side, as to be unfettered in this would be on the other; and verily, if a departed spirit can see and feel and do much, there is enough in the objects into the midst of which he will be thrown, and into close contact with which he will come, to awaken and to occupy his utmost powers. No emotions there are, or can be, trivial.

The future state will be marked by identity of character. The prevailing and cherished dispositions of men here will be their prevailing and cherished dispositions hereafter. Such is the express testimony of the Sacred Oracles, (Rev. xxii. 11,) "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." On this point I am aware that another sentiment has been held by many, (dictated, however, rather by their wishes than their convictions,) namely, that, however unsuited to another world our present dispositions may be, when God removes us into it he will make us fit for it, and that in this manner all will be set right when we die. This opinion is, no doubt, adapted to encourage those who wish to give the reins to their passions in the pursuit of sensual pleasure; but, as it is decidedly contradicted by the Scripture we have just quoted, so it is altogether at variance with the reason of the case.

We ask, on the one hand, upon what ground a change of disposition is expected from the mere occurrence of death. We can understand that death dissolves the organization of the body, and the connexion now subsisting between the body and the soul; but that it should have any tendency to alter the objects of our love and hatred, of our hopes and fears, is quite beyond our comprehension. For, though we go into another world, the main objects that will appeal to us there are the same as those which have engaged or repelled our affections on earth. Here we have had to decide whether we would pursue God's will or our own; there the great question will be the same, and, whether present with the body or absent from it, our decision will be the same. That the mere fact of our having a sight of the things which have only been told us can produce no change, may be evident from the consideration that the knowledge granted us on

earth is declared to be fully suited and sufficient for its purpose; so that, if this has been despised, nothing is to be expected from its augmentation. "If we believe not Moses and the prophets, neither should we believe though one rose from the dead," or though we ourselves were among them. If we have hated God and holiness in this world, we shall but hate them the more intensely when more clearly beholding them in the next.

If the mere fact of our entrance into the unseen state could produce no change, we ask, on the other hand, upon what grounds it is imagined that God will exert his power for this purpose. That he will graciously remove all remnants of iniquity from those who are already holy we have reason to believe, and we rejoice in the prospect; but why should he interpose to alter a state of improper feeling, which a man has spent his whole life in producing in defiance of his knowledge that it was wrong and would render him miserable hereafter, as well as of innumerable commands, exhortations, and entreaties to abandon and correct it? The entire life of such a man has been a course of disobedience and hostility to his Maker, without the shadow of repentance, even at the last moment; and yet, without any evidence, and contrary to all probability, it is to be taken for granted that God will gratuitously interpose to rescue him from the consequences of his own folly and sin!

Besides, the occurrence of such a transformation at the period of death would be utterly incompatible with the proceedings of the final judgment. It is there that every man's character is to be examined, both that retribution may be allotted accordingly, and that the disclosure of every character may manifest the righteousness with which it is done. But if every wicked man at his death is made holy, such a process is rendered altogether impracticable. There no longer remains any evil character to be brought to light, or even to be examined; while God will appear in the strange attitude of pronouncing the doom of the wicked upon a man who, whatever he may have been on earth, at that moment is holy. Nor could the punishment appropriated to sin be inflicted in fact upon a man that is holy. He would necessarily be free from the torment which dominant iniquity produces, and so would escape one part of hell entirely; while the sense of God's disapprobation, which is emphati-

cally the sinner's punishment, however it might affect him, could not operate as must have been intended, and as it inevitably would on the heart of the wicked. Such a change at the period of death, therefore, would lead to nothing short of the abandonment of the last judgment altogether, and the subversion of the whole system of moral government; and the very notion of it must be set down among those vain imaginations by which men have ever been striving to persuade themselves that they shall have peace, though they walk in the way of their own hearts.

While every man's character will be the same in the world to come as it has been in this, there is reason to believe that the manifestations and expressions of character will be of much greater force. We have already seen that in the future state there will be a great expansion of the powers generally; and as our emotions of joy and sorrow will be of new intensity, so will naturally be those of love and hatred, aversion and delight. With an augmented capacity of discerning spiritual things, a nearer and more direct approach to them, and a stronger set of feelings to be wrought upon by them, whether we regard God and holiness with enmity or love, our emotions respectively will have an intensity which they never had before. In like manner, all the passions which will have any existence at all in the life to come will exist as in gigantic stature; and, whether they may be of a kind to afford enjoyment or to create torture, they will act in both cases with an extraordinary, and, to us now, an immeasurable power.

The future state will be characterized by endless duration. Our own existence there will never cease. We derive this idea from the description given of it as a victory over death, which, as "the last enemy," is said to be "abolished," or "destroyed," or "swallowed up in victory,"—language which could scarcely be employed, if, notwithstanding the resurrection of the body, its restored life should at any period have a termination. In addition to this, however, the life to come is expressly termed a state of "immortality," in which "there shall be no more death." It thus appears unquestionable that our existence has to run beyond the grave "an endless round," and that it opens to us a prospect, not merely immense, but absolutely unbounded and eternal. It has been held by some, indeed, that a true and proper immortality is

not an original property of the human being, but a special gift to the redeemed; it is hard to see, however, how so important a natural endowment should be conferred on a moral ground. Besides, life after death is necessary to the future judgment; and the Scriptures leave us wholly in the dark as to any subsequent natural termination of our being.

The future state will be characterized, lastly, by unchangeableness. We do not mean, indeed, by this term, that our condition will admit of no alteration in its degree; but it will admit of none in its nature. Whether we are happy or miserable on our entrance into futurity, so we shall remain through the whole of its duration. The blessed will be "*for ever* with the Lord," and the wretched punished "with *everlasting* destruction from his presence, and the glory of his power."

No question probably would ever have been raised respecting a matter so plainly revealed, and a termination of this probationary state so manifestly appropriate, if it had not borne with an awful and tremendous weight upon the feelings of ungodly men. But the ampler consideration of this topic must be referred to a subsequent Essay. Whether there is any thing in the actual sufferings of the wicked which it can, with any truth, be represented as contrary to the righteousness and benevolence of God to inflict for ever, is also a question which will come more properly under review when we treat of the elements of future misery. For the present we close this argument by saying, that, whatever notion of limited suffering for the wicked any man may choose to entertain, he does it at his own risk. It is an invention of his own, and has not the slightest sanction from the Oracles of God. Whether it may be so or not, they at least say nothing of it: yet, if it had been so, it is incredible that they should not have spoken; and their silence justifies us in regarding the tenacity with which the notion is held, as the mere endeavour of a convicted criminal to shift off the anticipation of a punishment which he knows he cannot endure.

The application of the doctrine of a future state is important and solemn. This life to come,—this future existence of ampler powers, of endless duration, and of unchangeable condition, is the state from whence our Maker has drawn motives to enforce on us his law. "Obey me," says

he, "because hereafter I will render to every man according to his works." What vast and awful objects thus present themselves to us! What a boundless range of being! What intensity of blessedness or woe! What an awful permanency of the condition we now achieve for ourselves! Shall we really be, and shortly be, in this dread eternity? And which will be ours, its sorrows or its joys? Tremendous question! And soon answered; for, as transgressors against God, we all deserve its deepest woes. Which of us has repented of iniquity? Which of us has fled for refuge from the wrath to come? Which of us has entered the narrow way that leads to life eternal?

Only realize these things, and the fascinating influence of sin will wither in their presence. The very unwillingness which wicked men have shewn to believe that a future state exists, is a demonstration that they feel the motives drawn from it to be of tremendous power. It is because they are such as they cannot bear that they strive to obliterate and annihilate them. But the attempt is vain. Futurity is no fiction, but a reality, and a reality which will more than verify the amplest ideas which may be formed of it. Hear it, therefore, reader, if perhaps you have been lulling yourself into a sweet but fatal slumber by a notion as false as it is tranquillizing,—hear it, and reflect. Every cherished feeling and purpose will have its retribution in the world to come; and, if the joys and sorrows of eternity are of any weight with you, if you think that the agonies of that world will outweigh the sensual gratifications of this, see that you purchase not your present pleasures at so vast and ruinous a price. If there is nothing in sinful sweets for which it is worth while to endure everlasting pains, reject them; for, so surely as you exist, will there be "indignation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Think not that, having lulled yourself into slumber, you have succeeded in silencing the thunders of eternal wrath. Far from it; they are still uttering their voices in the loud and commanding sounds of truth. I charge you hear it; or, if you will not, but will rather close your ear that you may remain undisturbed in sin, prepare yourselves, at all events, for that day of terror, in which the final bursting of the storm shall awake you, to sleep no more.

ESSAY VIII.

THE ELEMENTS OF FUTURE HAPPINESS AND MISERY.

BEFORE we enter on the subject now to be investigated, namely, the elements of future happiness and misery, it may be of advantage to observe distinctly the position in which it meets us, as connected with our preceding inquiries. We have described at some length the government of motive and persuasion which God has established over the human race, and have found that some of its most moving considerations are drawn from the joys and sorrows of a future state of being, which are held out respectively as the reward of obedience, and the punishment of transgression. At this point we met the cavils of the infidel respecting the existence and reality of the future state itself, and shewed that, while all is dark and uncertain to unaided reason, life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. Driven from this ground, however, the sceptic immediately takes up another, and demands wherein the joys and sorrows of this alleged and demonstrated futurity consist. Boasting of a courage which will not be terrified by mere apparitions, he requires that the objects which are to inspire his hopes and his fears should be rendered tangible and distinct. And we acknowledge in a moment the reasonableness of this demand, inasmuch as the force with which motive can be applied to the mind must be proportionate to the clearness and vividness with which it is conceived. If the joys and sorrows of futurity be necessarily indistinct, they must certainly be uninfluential.

If the inquiry concerning the nature of future happiness and misery is taken up and pressed by irreligious men under an idea that it cannot be satisfactorily treated, and that it flings the advocate of Christianity into the midst of difficulties from which he cannot escape, we only say at present that such a triumph may be found to be premature. Whatever the difficulties of the subject may be, and we are not concerned to deny them, we are convinced that it may be exhibited in a distinctly tangible and influential form. Or, if the inquiry be pushed under a complacent imagination

that the representations of Holy Writ are violent and impossible, on this point we feel an equal confidence in the result of a fair and candid examination. Let infidels hear and judge. Nor infidels alone; for we take up the subject with the more readiness, because we apprehend that among other classes of persons there prevail mistakes, alike dishonourable to God and injurious to man.

As it is by divine revelation that futurity itself is brought to light, it follows, of course, that all our information respecting the sources of its happiness and misery must be derived from the same fountain. Let us therefore glance at some of its principal representations.

We may begin with the passage in the sixteenth of Luke, in which the happiness of the future state is indicated by the position of Lazarus "in Abraham's bosom," and its misery by that of the rich man "in hell," being "tormented" by a "flame." In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew we have no less than three descriptions of the same subject. One is given in the parable of the ten virgins, where the happy enter to the marriage feast, and the lost are shut out. Another occurs in the parable of the Lord and his servants; in which the language held to the faithful servant is, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and to the slothful, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The third is in the account of the final judgment: "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In the ninth chapter of Mark we have a description of future wretchedness thrice repeated within a few verses, in which "hell" is represented as "the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." In the fourteenth of John we have the following view of future blessedness: "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also." In the second of Romans we have the

statement from the apostle, that God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are contentious and do not obey the truth, tribulation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good." Another epistle presents us with the following passage. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." To the same subject may be applied the following descriptions from the book of Revelation: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. . . . And they were judged every man according to their works; and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire."

Before taking direct notice of these very diversified representations, I wish to advert to some prevalent misconceptions of them in relation to future misery, which it will be important in the outset to remove.

It has been extensively conceived that the sufferings of the future state will be occasioned by *fire*. This idea has been eagerly caught at by infidels and other irreligious persons as one entirely incredible and monstrous, and it has been made the occasion of turning the whole subject into derision. I confess that, on this point, I feel with the infidel; and although, if it were contained in a well-authenticated revelation from God, that transgressors of his law should be tormented in everlasting fire, I would bow to its

authority, I should undoubtedly regard it as an inexplicable and awful mystery. I do not conceive such a sentiment, however, to have any place in the Oracles of God. On the contrary, I am fully convinced that it is a popular misunderstanding of their phraseology, and that, according to the Scriptures, hell is not fire. I do not make this assertion in ignorance of the language which is employed on this subject; but I conceive that the term fire is used not literally, but figuratively, and to denote a state of severe suffering arising from a different cause. My reasons for this conviction are the following.

I argue first from the unsuitableness of the element of fire to the entire character of the future state, as exhibited in the Scriptures. That state is to be altogether spiritual; so much so that "flesh and blood cannot inherit" it, and the body itself is to become "a spiritual body." But fire is essentially a material element. The idea of it, therefore, is utterly incongruous with that of a spiritual world. It belongs to an entirely different system.

I argue secondly from the want of adaptation in fire to produce suffering in a future state. It can act only upon the body, but the pains of hell are in the soul. Besides, the anguish of the unseen world is represented as existing before the body is raised, as in the case of the rich man, who, immediately on his death, complains of being "tormented in this flame;" yet his soul only was suffering, and the soul is a substance on which, by its very nature, fire cannot act. Moreover, fire can act upon the body only as composed of matter. Since, therefore, when it is raised from the dead, the body itself is to be spiritual, it cannot in the nature of things be affected by fire, even in its fiercest conceivable forms.

I argue thirdly from the inconsistency of singling out this phrase for a literal interpretation, from a considerable number of others which are equally entitled to be similarly understood. The same state of suffering which is called fire, is also called darkness, death, worms, and exclusion from a feast; and I ask why these terms are not to be taken in their literal import, as well as fire. I know of nothing in their use which authorizes a distinction in the manner of understanding them; and, if no reason can be shewn for such a difference, it must clearly be held to be capricious and un-

reasonable. To shew the strange and unwarrantable caprice which has been indulged in this case, it will be sufficient to notice only the words of our Lord, "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Extensively as it has been believed that hell burns with real fire, no person has ever imagined it to contain real worms; yet I ask whether, if our Lord asserts the one, he does not with equal solemnity assert the other. For what reason should the fire be deemed a reality, if the worm be only an emblem? Upon no just principles of scriptural interpretation, is there an alternative between taking one of the quoted expressions literally, and the whole of them. If any person understand the whole of them in this manner, so far he is consistent; but then he plunges into another difficulty. If all the phrases employed be understood literally, they clash, and destroy each other. The state of future suffering, for example, is called both fire and darkness, which it cannot literally be, since fire produces light; it is called both fire and worms, which it cannot literally be, since fire destroys worms; it is called both fire and death, which it cannot literally be, since the idea of death is incompatible with that of torment by fire. The only possible method of understanding these expressions in harmony with each other is to consider them all as metaphors, contributing to the diversified illustration of a common subject.

I argue fourthly from the fact, that there are literal representations of future misery incompatible with the supposition of its being actual fire. The apostle teaches us that future sorrow will arise from the "indignation and wrath" of God, and other sacred writers trace it to his "anger." But God's anger is not fire, nor is fire God's anger. God's anger, indeed, is said to "burn like fire;" but in this case the word fire is obviously used as a metaphor, to illustrate that which is compared with it. This scriptural comparison ought to be sufficient to solve the whole difficulty, and to teach us that the term fire, as applied to future misery, is nothing more than a metaphor, used to set forth, as it does in a very striking manner, the awful effects which the anger of God will produce.

If, after these observations, I am asked whether I do not diminish the force of scriptural representations, and of their appeal to the feelings of a sinner, though it would be very

easy to shew that this is not the case, but that, on the contrary, a great advantage is obtained in this respect, I only say here that we are endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of the Word of God, and that alone. If I have failed on this ground, I make no other attempt to invalidate the sentiment I have impugned; if I have succeeded, no other question can be entertained. If there be any who think that a wiser and stronger appeal might be made to the hearts of men than God has devised, we leave them to employ it; we are content with the wisdom of our Maker.

A second misconception which we wish to remove, has arisen from the use of terms of great vehemence as descriptive of the infliction of divine punishment. The words *wrath, indignation, vengeance,* and others of this kind, have been supposed to indicate on the part of the Most High resentment, passion, or malevolence. It should be remembered, however, that these terms, like many referring to different aspects of his character, are applied to the Most High solely on account of the poverty of human language, and its inadequacy to express either his attributes or his proceedings. They require, therefore, a mode of interpretation by which every thing of human infirmity, or evil, shall be withdrawn from their application. All that we can justly understand by the words *wrath, indignation,* or *vengeance,* as applied to God's punishment of the wicked, is that the effects of his disapprobation, when finally expressed, will be very severe and awful; which, from his infinite greatness, it is plain they must be. We know that God is too excellent a being to partake of any of the evils or infirmities which characterize fallen and depraved humanity.

It should be remembered, too, that the infliction of future punishment will be exclusively of a judicial character. The Almighty will not appear as an injured individual, avenging his wrongs; but as a righteous judge, administering the law. Now although the retaliation of a personal injury might partake of the excitement of passion, nothing can be more remote from the proceedings of a judge. When pronouncing the sentence of the law, even in its most awful forms, no person, not even the criminal himself, thinks of saying that the judge has been in a passion, merely because he has passed sentence of death. Every one knows, not only that such a transaction may be gone through with feelings of perfect

benevolence towards the offender, but that it almost uniformly is accompanied by them in an eminent degree. Such, undoubtedly, will be the character of the great day of the wrath of God. Of whatever power to inspire the wicked with terror and despair, the deportment and temper of the Judge will be marked by a dignity, tranquillity, and tenderness, worthy of his infinite exaltation and glory.

Having removed these misconceptions out of our way, and shewn what, in some respects, the joys and sorrows of a future state *are not*, let us now take up the other side of the question, and inquire generally what they are, without metaphor, and, if possible, without indistinctness.

We may derive information on this point from the general views which the Scriptures afford of the future state itself. We are instructed that we shall exist hereafter as intelligent, sentient, and active beings, of powers, however expanded and rendered more vigorous, of the same nature and mode of action as those we now possess; and that our character, although perfected, will be the same in its principles, whether good or evil. We understand also, that we shall come into contact and intercourse with various beings, among whom will be the departed of mankind, angelic spirits both holy and wicked, and, above all, the eternal God himself.

The most immediate and direct source of pleasure or of pain, will evidently be the influence of our own character. The holiness and sin which we carry with us, under the various forms of pride, self-exaltation, selfishness, envy, malice, irascibility, and other evil passions, or their antagonistic virtues, cannot fail, by their own action, to generate a large amount of happiness or misery. It is so here, and it must be so hereafter.

Added to this will be the judgment we shall pass upon ourselves. As conscience now speaks in terms of approbation or reproof, so of course will it then; nor can its verdict be supposed to be at all less influential as an element of the future joy or woe, than it is well known to be of the present.

It is obvious that the various beings with whom we have to do will also form every one his own estimate of us, and of our character; an estimate which will inevitably be expressed in many ways, both direct and indirect. This, then, will be another source of pleasure or of pain to us. According to the estimate we may form of them, their esteem or their

loathing will inevitably become to us matter of chagrin or delight. Most especially will this be the case with respect to God himself, to whose approbation we shall then have a most direct and especial regard. Not only for what we may then be, but for the whole course of action which we have pursued on earth, will the approbation or the disapprobation of our Maker be fixed upon us, with a specific bearing and intensity which will never suffer it for a moment to be forgotten or to be depreciated, whether it be the source of joy or of grief.

Both the pleasures and pains of a future state will be greatly augmented by society. Among holy beings there will be a preparation for intercourse of a kind clearly most delightful, not merely as awakening the feelings to most happy exercise, but as originating the highest esteem and the most gratifying attachments; on the other hand, society among the wicked, as it will bring into contact nothing but what is evil, and awaken only passions which generate misery, must be conducive to the augmentation of their wretchedness.

The objects in the midst of which we shall be placed, will undoubtedly bring into action our feelings of delight or disgust, in a great diversity of methods, and, according to our character, will be strongly productive of happiness or misery. To be in the midst of holy beings and occupations, or where the glory of God is displayed, will of course be highly gratifying to the lovers of holiness and the friends of God; but it will plainly be no less mortifying to his foes, and the haters of righteousness.

To these sources of joy or woe must be added reflection. Connected as our condition hereafter will be with the course of action now passing, of whatever kind it may be, our thoughts will inevitably be thrown back upon the present life with intense interest. If we should be happy, that happiness will obviously be increased by reviewing the path of piety, glowing with displays of sovereign grace and redeeming mercy, along which we have been led to so blessed an issue, and by the mingled emotions of wonder and gratitude, of love and praise, excited in the retrospect. If we should be wretched, our wretchedness cannot but be augmented by looking back on the privileged circumstances in which we were placed, and upon the perverseness by which we have

not only lost what we might have gained, but have converted our very privileges into elements of grief.

Anticipation, finally, will lend its aid to reflection. Doubtless, both the blessed and the lost will eagerly look, not only backwards, but forwards too. If to know that their joys will be perpetual and lasting as eternity will elevate the bliss of the one, how much must the conviction that their woes are hopeless and endless aggravate the sorrows of the other!

Let us now see whether the sources of joy and sorrow thus enumerated as pertaining to the future state correspond with the specific representations of the divine Word. We are informed that Lazarus died, "and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom," language clearly expressive of the happy intercourse of a departed spirit with holy angels and glorified saints. The phrase "in Abraham's bosom" was well understood by the Jews, and well suited to the parable. Its interpretation is truly given by Christ himself, where he says, "I will receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also;" terms which indicate that a large portion of celestial blessedness will spring from the society of our Lord. Respecting the rich man we are told that "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." The phrase "lift up his eyes" is strongly expressive of the reflection to which his condition had given rise, and his distant view of Lazarus in bliss furnished him with additional materials for it. His cry for "a drop of water" shows how deeply he was convinced that his punishment was just, and admitted of no reversion, while it furnished the occasion of his being reminded of several things which added fuel to the flame: "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time hadst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." The rich man's anxiety concerning his brethren, "lest they also come into this place of torment," whatever it might have breathed of regard for their welfare, may fairly be referred in part to a dread of aggravating his own misery by mutual criminations and reproaches, too copiously arising out of long association in sin. A passage of similar import occurs in Luke xiii.: "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth, *when ye shall see* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out." To this misery of reflection and anticipation

may be referred the "worm," in a passage already quoted. That the pleasures of the blest arise largely from reflection operating in different circumstances, is evident from various representations. Take one for example from the Revelation, in which the redeemed stand "before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands, crying, with a loud voice, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

Various passages also indicate the effect of congruity and congeniality in the production of future happiness and misery. Hence Paul speaks of the saints as "made *meet* for their inheritance." Hence John teaches us that "nothing that defileth" can enter into the holy city; but that every thing unholy is "without," where also are "dogs, sorcerers, and whoremongers," the emblems of wickedness of every form. The saints are thus placed in circumstances congenial with their character that their happiness may have no alloy, but may rise to its highest pitch. We do not learn that any regard is paid to this particular in the case of the wicked. "Cast out" from every place where their presence would be uncongenial, they are left to whatever of strife, or hatred, or other aggravated wretchedness, their resemblance or their differences may inspire.

The most numerous and the most powerful passages, however, which describe the happiness and misery of the future state, refer to the estimation in which character is held by the universal Judge. His approbation and disapprobation respectively, directly and fully expressed, is that which is denoted by the apostle, when he speaks of the glory, honour, and peace allotted to the righteous, and the indignation and wrath, the tribulation and anguish, laid upon the wicked; by the admission to the wedding supper, and exclusion from it; by the recompense of the diligent servant, who, having been faithful over a few things, was to be made ruler over many things, and the punishment of the slothful one, who was cast into outer darkness; by the kingdom which the blessed of the Father are to inherit, and the fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, into which the wicked are to depart; by the lake of fire which constitutes the second death, and by the very death itself which is so constituted. In the same class are to be placed all descriptions of the final judgment; the respective measures of divine approbation or dis-

approbation being, simply and exclusively, under whatever form they may be represented, that which every man shall receive according to his works.

The reader will now judge whether the various scriptural statements respecting the happiness and misery of a future world, are any thing more than descriptions, more or less direct or metaphorical, of the pleasures or pains which may and must arise from the sources above enumerated.

We may here be asked, whether we do not reduce the scriptural statements below their proper import, and whether there is not a power and expressiveness in them which goes far beyond such simple, obvious, and seemingly slender topics as those already exhibited. If we acknowledge that such an appearance may exist, it is not because we think it is any thing more than an appearance; we are convinced, on the contrary, that the question proceeds on a view of the subject altogether inconsiderate and superficial.

We may observe in the first place, that the sources of happiness and misery which have been enumerated accord with all reasonable anticipations. If we had been given to understand that, in the future state, we were to be creatures of a different nature, or that we were to undergo some wonderful change in our structure and capacities, then, indeed, the pains and pleasures exhibited as pertaining to such a state ought likewise to have been marvellous and extraordinary. But, amidst all the wonders of futurity, *we* are to be the same as we are now; acting more vigorously, indeed, but by the same mechanism and with the same powers as at present. Perception, consciousness, emotion, reflection, are still to distinguish us; and what else can be anticipated, but that these must be the means and inlets of our pleasures and our griefs? If they be not, what can be?

It may be observed secondly, that no deeper sources of happiness or misery are now known to exist, than those from which we have drawn for a future world. If we had selected the lighter causes of grief or joy, and passed by any of a more important kind, it would certainly have been an error; but if in our present nature there are any springs of happiness or woe of great power, they are unquestionably such as we have pointed out. Well or ill-regulated passions, an approving or a condemning conscience, the complacency or aversion of our fellow-creatures, and above all of our

Maker, congeniality or uncongeniality of association and pursuit, together with reflection and anticipation, are undeniably the amplest and the deepest sources of mortal joy or woe. To say that these are small and unimportant is to say that all human griefs and delights are so, and that there is nothing materially influential in the causes which fill the earth with mourning, and lamentation, and woe. No man can truly say this. There are on earth elevated joys and desperate griefs, and it is from some or other of the causes above enumerated that they spring; and, if it is so here, it may be so hereafter.

It should be remembered, likewise, that the pleasures and pains which originate in the sources of which we have spoken are capable of an immense and almost unlimited augmentation. It is manifest that, however the joys or sorrows of the future state may spring from the same sources, they will be of far greater intensity than those of the present, inasmuch as all our powers will come into ampler and more vigorous action. We shall see new and most glorious objects, we shall form conceptions eminently adequate and impressive, we shall experience emotions of hitherto unknown intensity. Mortality and immortality will exhibit all the difference between infantine feebleness and gigantic strength. So that, while their sources are identical, the actual pleasures and pains of this world are mere trifles in comparison with those of the next. As those of the present life are limited to a degree commensurate with the feebleness of the body, so those of the life to come will be commensurate with the universal vigour of unincumbered spiritual existence.

It is besides to be considered that, in its circumstances, the future world will differ widely from the present. Here we are surrounded by a multiplicity of earthly objects, which make incessant appeals to our senses, and occupy a very large share of our attention; so that our minds are much withheld from the influence of spiritual and eternal things. The case will be very different when these objects shall be withdrawn, and we shall be removed into a world where every thing is spiritual, and spiritual considerations will be all in all. When, with an eye wide open to behold, and a heart that will answer instantly and vividly to every impression, we are thrown into the midst of the now invisible world, and God and duty, heaven and hell, time and eternity, with all

their wonders, stand revealed before us, while earth, with its thousand cares and ten thousand follies, is far away, consciousness, and feeling, and reflection, will be no trifles, and the evasion of them will be impossible.

This observation is especially applicable to our sensibility to the approbation or disapprobation of our Maker. At present it may seem altogether unimportant to some men whether their Maker loves or loathes them; such a consideration in no degree affects their happiness now, and they may imagine that its influence cannot be very powerful hereafter. The holders of such a sentiment, however, entirely overlook the constitution of human nature. By the supremacy of conscience, we are so constituted that our happiness ultimately depends more upon moral approbation than upon any other cause; as is manifest from the fact that a man severely stung by his own conscience is wretched almost beyond endurance, and entirely beyond mitigation. As we thus keenly feel our judgment of ourselves, so we feel the judgment of others in exact proportion to the light in which we regard them, and the agreement of their opinion with the testimony of our conscience. Hence the influence which must inevitably attach to the expressed approbation or disapprobation of God; a being whom, alike from his own excellency and his relation to us, we cannot but estimate above all others, and whose judgment will infallibly be in entire concurrence with our own. If we are slightly acted upon by this cause now, it is to be ascribed to the very slender manner in which we realize it, and the force with which our attention is diverted to other objects, together with the fact that Almighty God is withholding at present the full expression of his judgment, warning us only of the direction which it will ultimately take. When we consider the intimate connexion subsisting between the creature and the Creator, what a perfect command he must have over all our springs of happiness, how intense his feelings must be, and with what immense power he can convey them, if he so please, to any other being,—we cannot doubt but the direct and full expression of his approbation or disapprobation will be unspeakably impressive. That it has sometimes been found so upon earth is evident, both from the ecstasy which saints have occasionally enjoyed in his love, and from the unutterable agony which wicked men have suffered in the

conscious desert of his wrath. These, however, are but as drops, in comparison of the full cup, either of wrath or of bliss, which will be given us to drink hereafter. When we enter an eternal world, we shall find ourselves in the immediate and sensible presence of our Maker, whom it will be impossible, as here, to overlook or to forget. As creatures whom he has placed in a condition of responsibility, we shall have to render our account to him; we shall look to his approval or disapproval respectively as the direct and grand retribution of our conduct; we shall be conscious that every thing depends upon his sentence; while he will make us feel, in a manner direct and intense, the measure of approbation or disapprobation which equitably belongs to our deeds. No nobler heaven can be imagined than his smile, no hell more awful than his frown. These, in a word, are the agony and the ecstasy which the striking metaphors of the sacred penmen are employed to exhibit; and, however magnificent the import of them may be, we feel no hesitation in saying that the simple expression of approbation or disapprobation on God's part, not only realizes them all, but goes unutterably beyond them.

If these remarks should not be satisfactory, and if it should still be imagined that language so strong as that of Holy Writ must be intended to convey something more, we ask the objector to give it his own meaning. Are there any other intelligible sources of happiness and misery to which he will refer it? If so, let them be pointed it. Or would he wish to take it literally, and say, according to the notion which we have endeavoured to counteract, that hell is real fire? Not to repeat what I have said of the inconsistency of such an interpretation, I only ask whether he really thinks that fire could inflict severer pain than the disapprobation of God. He must have slender ideas of the anguish of the soul, who imagines that he says something more adapted to excite alarm when he speaks of being burnt, than when he tells of the anger of his Maker. Happy indeed might sinners be, if they could exchange the one hell for the other, and find their coming woe to be nothing worse than flames. It is obviously making a much more powerful use of the term fire, to take it as a metaphor for the illustration of something more awful than itself, than to understand it literally; and of nothing more awful, or more appropriate, can it be an

emblem, than of the wrath of God. There is no alternative, therefore, but to adopt the view which has now been taken of the subject, unless we confess at once that we do not know wherein the elements of future joy and sorrow consist; a confession which I should be very sorry to be obliged to make in the presence of an infidel, and one for which, with the Bible in my hand, I feel not the slightest occasion.

In concluding this argument, I turn to the reader, whatever may be his character, and I ask him, first, whether he now sees in the future state any intelligible and rational elements of sorrow and of joy. Will any man, can any man, answer in the negative? Or will any man affirm that the pleasures and pains of the coming world, as they have now been represented, do not possess a just and adequate adaptation to his mind, and to the purposes for which they are presented to him? Are they such as can reasonably be disregarded? Or, upon any principles of common sense, can a cherished insensibility to them be justified?

More particularly connecting this topic with the moral government of God, I take up that which constitutes its direct and exclusive instrument of retribution, namely, the approbation or disapprobation of the judge; and I ask, secondly, whether God could have attached to human conduct a more rational and appropriate recompense? If it be unjust, or unwise, or in any other sense unworthy of infinite excellence, to treat mankind on this principle, I then lay the case before the reader himself, even if he be an infidel, and beg him to say what rewards and punishments should be introduced in its stead.

But, if no method of treatment can be more reasonable, I ask him also whether it is not equally solemn and awful. As irreligious men, perhaps some of my readers have been accustomed to set the subject of future punishment in a monstrous and incredible light, for the purpose of persuading themselves that it would never be inflicted: "Can any one believe, that for such a course of life we shall be hereafter put into the fire? It is impossible." And you are right. You will not be put into the fire. But you will be made sensible of your Maker's disapprobation. What is there in this that he need be ashamed to inflict? You say, perhaps, "Nothing, but that will not be much to bear: I have borne it here, and I can harden my heart against it hereafter."

Alas! it is a vain imagination. There are times when you cannot silence your own conscience; how much less the voice of your Maker's rebuke! O no! If you reckon upon the sense of your Maker's loathing being a slight burden, you miscalculate dreadfully. The Scriptures instruct you better. "Who knoweth," says the psalmist, "the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear so is thy wrath." This is the agony which the sacred writers set forth by metaphors, of which if the literal import is terrific, that which they illustrate must be far more so. If you would not trifle with fire, how much less with what is still more terrible? You may easily convince yourselves of the fallacy of your expectation. You live now afar from God; but begin a different course. Strive to realize his presence, his excellency, your intimate connexion with him and dependence upon him; and you will find, even here, that his favour is life, and that death is in his frown. Risk it not; but, if you have incurred it, flee, while he declares, "I delight not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he turn and live."

ESSAY IX.

THE ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

So eager are men of determined irreligion, and more especially those of sceptical opinions, to evade, if possible, the sense of obligation, and, if that is not possible, the apprehension of punishment, that at every imaginable point they make a stand in resistance of religious doctrine, and meet us incessantly with objections and challenges of proof. On no subject are they more pertinacious, and, in truth, on none have they reason to be more sensitive, than on the suffering declared to be consequent upon sin in the life to come; first throwing out insinuations against the reality of a future state itself, and then requiring a demonstration of its pleasures and its pains. These two points we have endeavoured in preceding Essays to set at rest; but we must prepare ourselves for another combat.

We have cursorily stated that the joys and sorrows of the world to come are alike eternal. This sentiment gives rise to a renewed explosion of indignant feeling. "Horrible!" exclaim men upon whom the prospect bears with a weight which may well be deemed intolerable; "eternal punishment is dreadful beyond imagination, and must be more than sin can ever deserve, or than a benevolent being can ever inflict."

We take up this subject, we trust, with no feeling of levity; still less with one of gratification. Rescued as we hope we are from impending misery, it is no matter of pleasure to us to say that others are falling into it, or to represent it in awful colours. The thought of eternal suffering is truly melancholy and tremendous, and unfeigned joy would it afford us to announce a different prospect, if it could be done with safety and with truth; but, if it cannot, why should our feelings, by a false tenderness, blind us to the fact, and lead us to a sentiment, more pleasing indeed, but as ruinous as it is groundless?

Let it be observed also, that, if we maintain the eternity of future punishment, we do so upon no grounds of general reasoning. We consider it as a matter of pure revelation. If God had not spoken on this subject, we should be very far from broaching any opinion upon it at all, and should leave it in the darkness with which he would thus have invested it; but, since he has spoken, his word must, of course, be regarded as decisively settling the question.

Our first business, therefore, in reference to the solemn topic now before us, is to examine the testimony of the Sacred Oracles.

Here it is obvious to observe, in the first place, that future punishment is expressly asserted to be everlasting. So in Matt. xxv. 46,—"These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." The apostle (2 Thess. i. 9) speaks of the wicked being "punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord." And in the Revelation, in reference to the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, the smoke of its torment is said to "ascend up *for ever and ever*."

To the apparent force of these phrases it has been objected, that they are sometimes applied to things which have an end, as to a kingdom, for example; and that they do not necessarily, therefore, signify an endless duration. The question

is not, however, whether these phrases always and necessarily signify a proper eternity, but whether they do so when applied to future misery. To determine this, let it be observed that a proper eternity is the strict and primary import of *αἰὼν*, the term employed, as is obvious from its composition out of the two words *ἀεὶ ὤν*, *always being;* the word *age*, by which some persons insist upon translating it in the cases in question, being strictly a secondary and subordinate meaning. Now, if a proper eternity be denoted by *αἰὼν*, according to all sound rules of interpretation it must be every where taken in this sense, unless something appears to limit its signification. If used in reference to any temporal subject, a limitation is plainly necessary; but what can suggest any limitation when it is applied to the future state, unless it be the idea itself that future misery is not eternal? This is begging the very point in dispute, and assuming that which the passages are quoted to decide. It may be added, that the term which the sacred writers have chosen is the most fully expressive of a proper eternity which the scriptural languages contain; so that, if this cannot answer the purpose of denoting such a duration, neither could any other word they might have employed: upon the principle of interpretation acted upon by the objectors, therefore, it would have been impossible, without a circumlocution specifically adapted to the objection itself, for them to have expressed the idea of eternal punishment at all.

The same sentiment, however, is to be found in other forms. "He that believeth not *shall not see life.*" Life denoting, of course, a state of happiness hereafter, if an unbeliever's sufferings were ever to terminate, he would "see life," which our Lord declares he "shall not." Of the world of sorrow the same teacher says emphatically, "the worm dieth not, and the fire *is not* quenched." The use of the present tense gives great force to this passage, as though both past and future were merged in the permanent and ever-present character of a sinner's woe. It is analogous to the mode of expressing the eternity of God by the name I AM.

The metaphors employed convey the same idea. Future punishment is exhibited under the figure of *death*, *perdition*, and *destruction;* all of which are ultimate and permanent calamities, and could not correctly be employed to denote a state of temporary and transient suffering.

An antithesis of the most complete and uniform character is maintained in the Scriptures, between the punishment of the wicked and the happiness of the righteous. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal;" literally, "everlasting life." So shall we *ever* be with the Lord;" while the wicked shall be punished "with *everlasting destruction* from his presence." "He that believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but shall have *everlasting life;* he that believeth not *shall not see life,* but the wrath of God abideth on him." Now we ask whether these two states, the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked, could thus be correctly contrasted, if they were dissimilar in so essential a point,—if the one were transient and the other eternal? The duration of both is, in fact, expressed by the very same terms, and it would be to the last degree arbitrary to interpret them differently. If the suffering be of limited duration, so also must be the happiness; or if the happiness be eternal, so likewise the misery. What reason can be shewn, why the same term should not be interpreted in the one case as it is in the other?

The bearing of divine revelation upon men finally ungodly is of unmingled wrath. "Say ye to the wicked, it shall go ill with him," is the spirit and tone of every thing which relates to persevering iniquity, and nothing of a contrary kind is hinted at; but upon repentance it can scarcely be believed, therefore, that, after a season of punishment, it will be eternally well with the wicked, without doing violence to the entire character of the divine Word. Let us look, however, more specifically at one of its representations. When the rich man petitioned for a drop of water to cool his tongue, his request was simply and totally denied. No opportunity could have been more fit than this for Abraham to have encouraged the sufferer, by reminding him that, after a time, his torments would cease; but as the denial was direct, so it was founded upon a declaration which made it altogether irreversible: "Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

No sentiment can be more copiously or more forcibly inculcated in the Scriptures than this, that there is no

deliverance from the consequences of sin but by the free mercy of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon the repentance and submission of the sinner; but if the punishment of a sinner terminate of itself, and because he has suffered as much as is consistent either with the goodness of God or with his own demerit, then he will attain deliverance from the consequences of sin without any reference to repentance, atonement, or mercy, which according to the Scriptures can never be the case.

The array of scriptural passages alleged to favour the idea that all men will be ultimately happy, is extremely slender. We are reminded that God is declared to have "loved the world," that Christ "tasted death for every man," that God "will have all men to be saved," and that he is "the Saviour of all men;" all which is unquestionably true of that state of conditional and probational mercy in which mankind without exception are placed, but which argues nothing against the ruin awaiting those who "reject the counsel of God against themselves."

We are likewise referred to a phrase used by Peter in Acts iii. 21, "the restitution of all things"—as containing the idea of the ultimate happiness of the human race. The answer to this is a criticism, into the grounds of which I cannot here enter at large. It seems, however, that the passage is mistranslated, and that it should be rendered in English as follows:—"Whom the heavens must receive until the period of the accomplishment of all the things which God hath spoken, by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Thus rendered, the passage has evidently no relation to the subject before us.

It has been conceived by some that the punishment of sin will consist in the extinction of being immediately by the exercise of divine power, as an act of judicial execution; and some phrases employed by the sacred writers may seem to favour such an opinion. The apostle says that "the wages of sin is death;" and in Rev. xx. 14, the punishment of the wicked is spoken of as "the second death." It should be recollected, however, that to take the word *death* in the sense of the extinction of spiritual being is as truly to make a metaphor of it as taking it in the sense of misery; and that, as thus metaphorically understood, it is violently out of harmony with other metaphors by which also, as we have seen, the punishment of sin is described.

Such is the import of the sacred record on the subject under consideration. We admit that it ought to be explicit and decisive, and we appeal to every man of common understanding whether it is not so. If there be a person of tender and pious mind who would wish to believe that, though God has revealed nothing respecting it, there may be some plan of relief yet undisclosed, we must seriously beg of him to consider whether this hope, however delightful, can, in the face of such testimony, be consistently retained.

When a question of pure revelation is decided by revelation itself, it can neither be impugned nor confirmed by any general reasoning. Amidst whatever difficulties it may leave us, the acknowledged voice of God must be decisive. Let us look, nevertheless, at the general reasonings which have been employed on the subject now before us. Perhaps we shall see that even here Scripture and common sense are still in harmony.

On what grounds, then, has the eternity of punishment been objected to?

It has been objected to, in the first place, *as irreconcilable with the goodness of God.* "Is it credible or conceivable," it is asked, "that a being of infinite benevolence should, for any amount of offences against himself, render another being eternally miserable? No benevolent *man* would do so; much less God, the universal parent, for 'God is love.'" The force of this objection has been sometimes augmented by introducing the imagined horrors of a literal fire. How any benevolent being *could* inflict the pains of everlasting fire, I confess I do not know; and I am truly happy that I have not to answer the question. This difficulty we have already obviated, by shewing, I trust satisfactorily, that the instrument of future punishment is not fire, nor any other element besides the expressed disapprobation of God. There is nothing contrary to benevolence in the *nature* of this punishment; we confine ourselves now, therefore, simply to its duration.

We ask, then, by whom this objection is brought. If it is brought by a man who acknowledges that, according to the Scriptures, though the wicked are not to be punished eternally, yet they are to be so for "ages of ages," or for a long though limited period, we say that it recoils upon himself. We ask him what benevolent man would visit even

his bitterest enemy with a punishment which would last for ages of ages? If the goodness of God be reconcilable with the one, it is reconcilable also with the other.

Some persons, however, make a more consistent, though still inconclusive, use of the goodness of God in this discussion, by arguing from it the impossibility of his inflicting any other punishment than what is corrective, or intended for the good of the transgressor himself. "No benevolent man would deliberately do another an injury of any amount, however small, although an injury even of great extent had been done to him; on the contrary, when his passions were cool, he would forgive the offender, and inflict only such kind and degree of punishment as would tend to his good. Such, therefore, we may conclude the conduct of the Blessed to be."

Unfortunately for this reasoning, however, it does not correspond with God's actual conduct, as it is now open to our cognizance. Some of the punishments which he inflicts are plainly destructive, and not corrective. We refer to Sodom and Gomorrah, for example, and ask if the destruction of those cities was intended for the good of their inhabitants. And if God inflicts destructive punishments here without inconsistency with his goodness, why may he not hereafter?

Besides, the principle of the objection will not bear application, even to men. Persons of unquestionable benevolence do inflict destructive punishments, without incurring any suspicion of malignity. When a murderer forfeits his life, for example, we ask whether that punishment is merely corrective, and intended for his good; and whether the infliction of it brings into suspicion the benevolence, either of the jury who tried him, of the judge who condemned him, of the sovereign by whom the sentence was confirmed, or of the functionary by whom it was executed. We shall be told, perhaps, that these parties act, not in their personal, but in their official capacity, and that the whole transaction is of a judicial character. And we say, Precisely so. This is the very point upon which the whole argument turns. It appears, then, that, in judicial transactions, the infliction of destructive punishment is not inconsistent with benevolence. Now God's punishment of sinners is strictly a judicial transaction; one in which he appears, not as a being avenging a personal wrong, but as the administrator of government

executing a judicial sentence: his conduct, therefore, is not inconsistent with benevolence herein.

To the doctrine of eternal punishment it is objected, secondly, that *it is more than human iniquity can ever deserve.* "By being without end," it is argued, "the punishment becomes at length more than equivalent to any sins committed in our present state of being."

We take upon ourselves, then, according to this objection, to become judges of the desert of sin. Are we competent to do so? As creatures, and as at the best ignorant creatures, and possessing very inadequate ideas of the glory of our Maker, is it likely that we should judge righteous judgment? Are we not too deeply interested in the decision to be impartial? And, of all men to whom such a question might be submitted, are ungodly men the most likely to form an accurate estimate? What should we anticipate, if a party of convicted felons were entrusted to select the penalty which should be awarded to their crimes? What sin deserves is what God alone can fully know, and what we must leave it to him to reveal; and why may we not have confidence that his judgment herein will be according to truth? Is there any thing about him so wanting in benevolence or in equity, so indicative of malignity or of fraud, as to warrant a suspicion that he will allot to misconduct a punishment excessive and unjust? Is it needful that there should be a supervisor over him in this respect, or is it reasonable that this office should be filled in succession by every criminal whom he may have occasion to punish?

If an obdurate rebel differs on this point with his Maker, every right-minded man on the contrary agrees with him. Listen to the language of those who have looked at their obligations most intently, and in whom the love of self and of sin is at length subordinated to the love of God, and you find every one of them saying, "Thou art clear when thou judgest, and right when thou condemnest." But we challenge even ungodly men themselves to the consideration of this question. Let any man look at the reasonableness of the duty which God requires, at the force of his claim to obedience, and at the wilfulness with which it is refused, and then say, first, whether he does not deserve the disapprobation of his Maker; and secondly, whether he will not deserve it through the whole course of his existence.

Two circumstances should here be borne in mind. The first is, that the future existence of a sinner is not perpetuated for the purpose of punishment, or by any special act of divine power at all. God created man immortal. If, therefore, an impenitent sinner were not to be punished, still he would have to exist for ever; and the reason of his punishment being eternal simply is that God's disapprobation will rest on him as long as he exists. Now there is nothing inequitable in the principle of putting a man to such a trial of his character as that his whole life shall be affected by the result. It is no more than bringing the future to bear as a motive upon the present. It is continually done as to this life, both by God and man; and, in truth, it is difficult, if not impossible, to devise a trial of character having any considerable consequences at all which shall not extend its influence to this point. If it is not necessarily contrary to the desert of actions that the conduct of a youth should be made to influence the whole of his life, even to old age and death, neither is it so that our conduct here, the childhood of our existence, should affect our condition to distant and even eternal ages hereafter.

A second circumstance worthy of notice is that, in the case of sinners hereafter, there is no species of suffering created for the purpose of punishment. In this respect divine punishment differs essentially from human. Laws, indeed, express the disapprobation of the lawgiver against the transgressor of them, but that disapprobation itself is not the penalty attached to disobedience; there is some positive suffering invented and assigned to the criminal, as a punishment which he shall be sure to feel, and as a concentrated expression of the lawgiver's displeasure, after the infliction of which justice is satisfied. In the divine government the case is widely different. There the disapprobation of the lawgiver is itself the substance and the whole of the punishment; and no concentrated expression of it is resorted to, nor even any peculiar expression of it at all, for the sake of punishment, but the punishment is just that sense of God's displeasure which the sinner must derive from immediate contact with his Maker's holiness if no punishment were to be inflicted. The sinner's punishment, therefore, consists simply in the measure of disapprobation he has deserved. Now, what we deserve of simple approbation or

disapprobation we deserve at all times. If the disapprobation we deserve is concentrated in some specific suffering, then the duration of the disapprobation itself becomes limited; it ceases with the infliction of the punishment in which it was concentrated, and, upon the score of that fault, the wrong-doer deserves nothing more. But our desert of disapprobation itself is permanent, and undergoes no alteration by the lapse of time; and, if ever the existence and ordinary expression of such disapprobation ceases, it must be on some ground of favour, and not of desert. Thus, if a worldly and disobedient life deserves God's disapprobation when we first meet him in another world, it will deserve it no less at any assignable period afterwards; and it must continue to do so as long as we shall continue to exist, that is, eternally. If this principle is correct, it is obvious that eternal punishment does not exceed the desert of sin.

If there is nothing in the objections brought against the doctrine of eternal punishment at all availing to impugn it, either as malevolent or unmerited, it stands but the more firmly in our convictions for this examination. We now proceed to add a few observations tending more fully to shew the harmony of it with rational anticipation.

It is of the nature of the future state that the approbation and disapprobation of God, as either may be deserved, shall be immediately perceived and felt. It is not so now. By our present constitution we are so divided from our Maker that, although he can, and sometimes does, make us intimately sensible of his estimate of our conduct, he is not always or necessarily doing so; he rather informs us of what he approves or disapproves, for our guidance in preparing for that state in which his sense of our conduct will be immediately felt by us. To the future world this property essentially belongs; and hence, if such perception of his disapprobation constitutes misery, the misery of a sinner must be permanent and endless.

The expectation of eternal punishment for disobedience harmonizes with the general character of our existence. It is divided by the judgment of the great day into two parts; one of probation, and another of recompense. Here we are plied with motives to influence our conduct, hereafter we shall be visited with results to reward it. These two processes respectively occupy the present and the future,—that is to say,

time and eternity. What can be in stricter keeping with the great division and the general aspect of our being?

The probation in which we are placed is eminently worthy of permanent results. We are put to the test in the main aspect of our being, namely, to see whether we will love the Lord our God; we are appealed to in a manner adapted to awaken all our powers, whether of judgment or of feeling, whether of the conscience or of the heart; considerations are addressed to us of every kind, pertaining both to our duty and our happiness, appealing to every passion whether of fear or love, drawn from every quarter human and divine, and having the power of both worlds, the present and the future. Here therefore is a probation of the utmost completeness, and one in all respects worthy, if any can be worthy, of having permanent results. So long as our being lasts, even though its duration be eternal, will it be fit that we should bear the marks of our conduct in such a trial.

It is true, indeed, and it has sometimes been strongly insisted on, that the probation to which God has subjected the human race has not presented always the same aspect of completeness. Not all have been favoured with the full light of revelation, nor are all saluted now by the heart-stirring appeals of redeeming mercy. It is over the everlasting misery of these more especially that philosophers compassionately stand aghast. Is it not revolting to reason, they exclaim, that so many unenlightened and untutored nations and generations of men should be supposed to be, under the rule of a just and benevolent Deity, eternally lost? Embodied as the conception is in current orthodoxy, can any one really believe it?

That this belief—for a *belief* with some persons it assuredly is—is not so utterly revolting to reason as it is deemed may appear from the following considerations.

What are called the unenlightened portions of mankind are not absolutely, but only comparatively so. They have fewer means of knowledge than others, but still they have means of knowledge; and they are consequently placed in a condition of just responsibility, and actual probation.

The less enlightened of mankind have not made a proper use of the means of knowledge they possess. Instead of, according to their light, glorifying God as God, they have universally turned aside to multiform idolatries, and aban-

doned themselves to the grossest vices. All ancient and all modern testimonies conspire to confirm this representation.

It is not all contrary to reason, therefore, that the displeasure of God against the universal impiety and profligacy should be announced now, and inflicted hereafter, in a degree proportionate to the means of knowledge enjoyed. That the sufferings hence ensuing should be endless is not a matter of choice, but of inevitable sequence; it is, in truth, an accident, resulting from the fact that immortality is an essential element of human existence, and that the retributory portion of it, which is, of course, the last, is without end.

To say that the probation thus instituted is not an adequate foundation for such issues, is to call into irreverent question the wisdom of God, and to set ourselves up as judges in a matter altogether, and unspeakably far, beyond our competency.

I may now proceed to observe, that, even if divine punishment of sinners were to cease, it would not be possible that their sufferings should come to an end. For, in truth, the elements of suffering lie in their character itself, and so long as that remains unchanged, misery must be inextinguishable. Were the Almighty no longer to make sinners feel his disapprobation of their conduct on earth, the dispositions they cherish in hell are such as he must abhor; and even apart from this, the established dominion and perpetual exercise of unholy passions would themselves constitute an unutterable woe. The effects of our present probation will not and cannot cease without a change of character. In that case, indeed, as the torment of reigning sin would be removed, so we might admit the probability that God would devise some way of relieving from his disapprobation for the past a creature then become holy; but, as the force of Scripture is against such a supposition, so is there in it not a shadow of reasonableness. If there were a new state of probation, there is no reason to think that those who have failed in the first would improve the second; and as little reason is there to expect that God, whose authority and mercy have been so criminally despised, would interfere in sovereignty to remove a perverseness which had been cherished to inveteracy in circumstances of patience and of hope.

There is the less reason why future punishment should be brought to an end, because its permanence has been fairly

and forcibly exhibited among the motives now bearing upon us. If the fact that the punishment of sinners would never end were now concealed, and were hereafter to break suddenly upon their astonished and afflicted eyes, it might, with some colour of justice, be said, "This is not reasonable. If I had known this before, it would have greatly added to the force of the motives exhibited to me, and I certainly would have taken care not to come hither." But there is no concealment. We are from the first explicitly informed that the results of our present conduct will be permanent, and that eternity depends upon the employment of time: the whole case, therefore, is fairly before our eyes; and if there is any thing in everlasting sorrow which it is indispensable to avoid, it is only for us to shun the paths of iniquity which inevitably lead to it.

Or, if by transgression we are already exposed to a punishment so dreadful, through divine mercy there is still an opportunity for our escape. Though there is no deliverance from hell itself, yet from the brink of it every man may flee. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them, and is both able and willing to save unto the uttermost. To a man therefore who is, or professes to be, terror-smitten at the prospect of eternal misery, we say, with some reasonable astonishment, "Why, then, do you not flee from it? There is no bond which holds you to it, there is no destiny which forbids your escape. You must indeed be everlastingly miserable *if you proceed in your present course;* but why will you proceed? Or why should you? You ought not; you need not; there is nothing for which you can imagine it worth while to do so: if your position be terrific, therefore, flee, and stay not a moment in so tremendous a peril." If, when thus warned, privileged, and entreated, a sinner will not flee, he makes his own election of misery, and has no one to complain of but himself.

If doubt attaches in the mind of any person to the view of the Gospel which I have now exhibited, I can only say at present, that we will hereafter enter upon it more fully. In the mean time, taking it for granted, let us observe carefully the difference between bringing a calamity upon a person in fact, and bringing the prospect of it, as contingent upon his own conduct, to bear upon him as a motive. With what reason can any man complain of a peril from which, without

any sacrifice or difficulty, he may escape; more especially if that peril is put in his way for the very purpose of deterring him from a course which must inevitably, and apart from that danger, prove his destruction?

While we have introduced these general observations, however, we wish it to be particularly observed that we lay no stress upon them for establishing the doctrine of eternal punishment. We believe it harmonizes with sound reason; but we do not think that reason could ever have discovered it, or can now demonstrate it. Its proof is in the authority of him who has revealed it. We add general reasonings only to shew that, in objecting against God, the sceptic has not, even on this most awful subject, common sense on his side.

Upon this ground, therefore, we make an earnest appeal to men of irreligion. You have often heard, as a general doctrine of Christianity, that those who die in sin will be everlastingly miserable. What an awful and heart-stirring consideration! Convinced that you are living in sin, and having every prospect of dying in it, you have felt this sentiment bear heavily on you. Hence you have ventured to regard it with a welcome suspicion, and have at length, perhaps, brought yourselves to a kind of persuasion that it is not, and cannot be true. Really, in such a case, I might almost spare myself the trouble of argument, and refer you to the process of your own minds for a demonstration of the fallacy of your disbelief. You entertain it because you want it. It is necessary to your tranquillity in sin; and you cling to it fondly, because without it you could not dare the course of iniquity which you love, and which you now can pursue almost undisturbed. Whence is it likely that a sentiment should have originated which thus fosters the evil you cherish? Can it be of God? Impossible. It is, and must be, of the father of lies.

If you have been an attentive reader of this Essay, perhaps you are secretly, though reluctantly, convinced that truth is not on your side. A punishment truly eternal looks you in the face, if you persevere in transgression. Are you reflecting on it, and endeavouring to realize it? Or are you turning away from it, resolved to evade what you cannot contradict? You mean, then, to continue in sin, linked as it is with perdition, and make up your minds to the endurance of eternal woe? Your iniquities you will not part with, although their

consequences be everlasting sorrow? If you shrink from such an avowal, we say again, reflect upon a topic which is powerfully adapted to wean you from the iniquities you too plainly love. Think that eternal misery *is* before you! Do you say it is too dreadful to think of? Then how much more dreadful to endure! And how fearful is the risk which you run! Dreadful as it is, it is as yet an evil from which you may escape. Behold the refuge set before you! For it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. If the ruin be awful, why not the more eagerly and the more instantly flee? Instead of complaining of God, who warns you of the danger, you should complain of yourself, who will still linger within the sphere of it. And what makes you hesitate? What sacrifice have you to make, but that of iniquity? What difficulty to encounter, but that of giving up your sins? And is it for these you will stay and perish? Which of them is worthy of it? Will the whole of them make amends even for the smallest portion of the woe they entail upon you? Is it not an act, not merely of the deepest criminality, but of the extremest folly, to cling to them another instant? O abandon them at once, and submit yourself to Him who waits that he may be gracious, and is ready to snatch you as a brand out of the fire!

ESSAY X.

THE ACCUSATORY ASPECT OF THE GOSPEL.

In several preceding Essays we have been treating of God's moral government of man, or that system of ultimate rewards and punishments by the exhibition of which he enforces a present obedience to his will. Having in the first instance surveyed the general scheme of this dispensation, we have proceeded to take up severally the points against which the cavils of unbelievers are principally directed; such as the reality of a future state, the elements of future happiness and misery, and the eternity of future punishment. If,

as we have passed along, our ground has been made good, the system of God's moral government is open to no reasonable complaint; it is, on the contrary, one under which every man ought to be obedient, grateful, and happy.

The case, however, is not so. The lamentable fact is, that not only one man, but all men, have broken the law which they ought to have obeyed, and have to await God's pleasure towards them, not as subjects merely, but as rebels. How God will deal with transgressors is a question of the deepest interest. It might seem, indeed, as though a question could scarcely be asked on the subject; inasmuch as the natural and obvious method, in case of a broken law, is for the penalty to be inflicted on the transgressor. Since we have sinned, it might be taken as a matter of course that we should be punished. If, however, there is any room for a doubt as to this result, the inquiry concerning it is obviously most momentous; since it is in substance nothing less than whether we shall, or shall not, be consigned to unutterable and everlasting sorrow.

In what manner, then, will God treat the transgressors of his law? That he does not immediately proceed to judgment and condemnation is manifest from facts; and, when we consult his Word in order to ascertain his intentions, we learn the following particulars. First, that he considers transgressors wholly and deeply criminal, and himself not only entitled, but called upon, to execute upon them the full penalty of the law. He might and should, and as a judge he must without some compensation to his government, subject every sinner to proportionate punishment. Secondly, that, nevertheless, in his own undeserved and sovereign goodness, he does not mean to adopt this method, having rather provided an atoning sacrifice, and by that means a method of escape for the guilty. Thirdly, that of every sinner, in order to his deriving benefit from this dispensation, he requires a change of mind, consisting in repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And lastly, that to the rejection or neglect of this scheme of mercy he attaches great criminality and aggravated punishment: "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

Such an aspect of benignity and hope might reasonably have melted a sinner's heart to love and joy. Every sinner,

in truth, ought to have availed himself of it with instant haste and boundless gratitude. Yet this has not been done. Unbelievers and irreligious men are still found multiplying objections, and asking captious questions. One notices the stress laid upon faith, and asks if it is not absurd to hold a man accountable for his belief, as though he could believe what he pleased; another refers us to the necessity of changing the heart, and asks how this can be done if God withholds the gift of the Spirit; a third looks suspiciously at the doctrine of the atonement, and insinuates that, if Christ died only for the elect, general invitations are no better than a farce; while a fourth quarrels with the accusatory aspect of the Gospel, and can never believe that all the world, but more especially himself, might justly be sent to eternal perdition. Such is the opposition with which, not only the law, but the Gospel also has to contend; and from these cavils will be derived the subjects of the remaining Essays.

We take up at present the last of the objections enumerated, as properly the first in order. We have said that, although God does not proceed to the immediate execution of his wrath upon a sinner, he nevertheless conceives that he might do so with perfect equity and unblemished honour; nay, that it would have been absolutely necessary for him to do so, unless a substitute had been found. That this is a scriptural representation may appear from the total absence in the sacred records of every thing like an excuse or apology for sin; from the very provision of an atoning sacrifice, an expedient to which a benevolent being would never have had recourse without necessity; and from the fact that nothing is ever said of the remission of sins upon any other ground. It is a representation, nevertheless, against which unbelievers have often exclaimed as monstrous and incredible. "It is impossible," they allege, "that any sins committed by us can deserve so dreadful a retribution. Besides," say they, "it would be in the highest degree dishonourable to God to suppose that, even if deeply offended, he will not forgive; while there are various grounds on which reasonable allowance may be made for transgression."

Here it may be observed in the outset, and before we notice these allegations particularly, that, if there be any ground on which it would be either inequitable or dishonourable in God, as the administrator of the law, to inflict the

punishment it denounces, this is a severe reflection upon the law itself. It cannot be unjust to execute a just law, even in its severest parts; and, if the law of God be just and holy, so must he be in administering it, even to the destruction of the ungodly. If any man will take so bold a stand as to affirm that the law itself is unrighteous, let him do so; but let him recollect that, in impugning the equity of the divine law, he impugns the excellency of the whole government of which it is the rule, and the character of that glorious Being by whom it has been founded.

But let us examine whether any thing can reasonably be alleged in contradiction of a sinner's righteous exposure to "the vengeance written."

Future condemnation is conceived to be a punishment greater than any sins of ours can deserve. "The worst of men," say the objectors, "are but indulging passions which are natural to them; while many are pursuing for the most part courses of rectitude, and cherishing habits of virtue, which render them highly worthy of esteem. Can the awful wrath denounced in the Scriptures be considered as a fair retribution for such a life?"

The whole meaning of this objection is that it is difficult to realize the desert of sin. No doubt this is a fact; and it obviously arises from the prevalent self-complacency which renders us all extremely loath to admit severe accusations against ourselves. But, besides this, there are several other causes to which it may be referred.

It may arise in part from erroneous ideas of the punishment of sin. Should any person, for example, imagine that God intended to put him into a fire, and keep him in that state of torment for ever, I would excuse him if he were never able to see how any conduct of his could have deserved it. All inaccurate or even indistinct conceptions of the nature of future punishment, must occasion a measure of similar embarrassment. Let it be carefully remembered, therefore, that the punishment which God has threatened is nothing more than the sense of his disapprobation, expressed proportionately to our misconduct. This punishment is in its nature most appropriate, since, if our ill conduct towards God deserves any thing at all, it can deserve nothing so justly as his disapprobation; and it cannot be excessive in its degree, since it is in all cases to be proportioned to the

crime. Let any man who acknowledges himself to be a transgressor of God's law, ask himself whether common sense and sound reason repel the sentiment that he deserves God's proportionate disapprobation.

The difficulty of realizing the desert of sin may arise in part from viewing it only, or chiefly, in its exterior aspect. In this view a person of moral life may seem almost blameless, and even profligacy may be deemed a venial indulgence of natural propensities. But the aspect of sin in which its principal criminality appears is thus completely overlooked, and a true estimate of its desert can never be formed. Sin requires to be considered as committed *against* GOD. It is in fact, in all cases, a violation of his law, and herein its principal, and often its entire criminality lies. To find how much evil there is in our conduct, it is not so necessary to ask how much there is of falsehood, of idleness, of profanity, or intemperance, as to inquire what there is in it of disregard of our Maker, and preference of ourselves. Now, when our conduct is examined in this manner, we find that an habitual preference of ourselves, and disregard of our Maker, is uniformly characteristic of an irreligious state. It not only appears in the reckless profligacy of the vicious, but it may be traced through the whole tissue of human virtue; insomuch that many persons, who are perhaps unblameable towards men, have never cherished any sentiment or purpose of devotedness to God.

If you ask me, therefore, what punishment *you* can have deserved, who have committed neither intemperance nor fraud, but have cultivated so many estimable qualities, I reply, You have forgotten and disregarded your Maker; you have withheld from him the dedication of your affections and your powers; nay, you have set up in opposition to him your own will, and have resisted the entire authority which he claims over you. If this seem to you to be a light evil, I have to say on the contrary, that it comprehends the whole importance of the case. The dedication of your heart to God is the very thing which he commands, and this you refuse. You claim approbation for your outward conduct; but that is nothing while your heart is in opposition to him. Suppose yourself the subject of an earthly prince, maintaining an actual obedience to the laws while you denied his right to govern, and constituted your dwelling a little garrison of

rebellion; would your abstinence from other wrong screen you from the accusation of treason, a worse crime than those you had been so careful to avoid? Not for a moment. And if, in like manner, with whatever virtues, you are an enemy to your Maker, this is not only an evil, but absolutely the greatest evil of which you can be accused. What, indeed, can be worse? Can any thing be a more direct and complete violation of his law? Can any thing be more directly aimed at his authority, or more entirely destructive of his glory? If he is not allowed to be justly displeased with this, against what may his disapprobation be denounced? Is not this the very spirit which generated rebellion among the angels in heaven, and which constitutes the essential character of their wickedness in hell?

The difficulty of realizing the desert of sin may arise, lastly, from overlooking the nature and force of the obligations under which we lie. As there can be no criminality where there is no obligation, so the degree of criminality is naturally measured by the force of the obligation disregarded. The relations of subjects to a sovereign, of servants to a master, and of children to a parent, are universally felt to create obligations which cannot be disregarded without wrong. Now, let it be coolly and deliberately asked, whether our relation to God does not create an obligation much stronger than all these. The strongest of all human obligations is that of a child towards a parent, and its force is founded upon the fact that the parent is instrumentally the author of the child's being. In what a superior sense, however, is God the author of our being! And how much must our obligation to him who made us surpass in force any other! If it would be criminal to dishonour an earthly parent, much more so must it be to disregard our heavenly one; and if we should not only execrate another, but abhor ourselves, if capable of the former, it can be only through inconsideration or inconsistency that we do not much more deeply loathe ourselves for the latter. So long as we acknowledge that an undutiful son deserves the disapprobation of his father, we cannot deny that our undutifulness towards God deserves disapprobation, not merely of an equal, but a greater degree.

But, if the infliction of punishment cannot be made to appear unreasonable by light representations of sin, the

unbeliever betakes himself next to the goodness of God. "It is the glory of man," says he, "to pass by a transgression; and none but a savage would refuse to do so. And, admitting that we have given our Maker just cause of offence, is it to be supposed for a moment that he will not forgive? What then becomes of his boasted benevolence? What father, if his son were ever so rebellious, would kill him? Are not all parental punishments intended for the good even of undutiful children? And will our Father inflict punishment of any other kind?"

Such is the reasoning often employed by irreligious and sceptical men, to shew that the doctrine of final perdition is unreasonable. Though it avails nothing to their purpose, they have taken hold herein of a portion of truth; and I rejoice to say that, so far as they go, they are perfectly right. They do no more than justice to the character of God. Most truly he meditates no revenge, and cherishes no resentments. He has no pleasure whatever in laying upon men as transgressors the punishment which is their due. On the contrary, passing every provocation by, he not only spares the transgressor for a long period, but pours continual and undiminished benefits upon him, making "his rain to fall and his sun to shine alike on the evil and the good." Nor, although, as a holy being, he must every where disapprove what is unholy, does he ever, as a father, inflict any other than corrective or beneficial suffering; and, if he were left to his own feelings, he never would inflict any other.

If we should be asked whether God is not left to his own feelings, and whether he may not in this respect do what he pleases without difficulty, we should reply to this question by asking, whether he does, or does not, sustain the character of a governor and a judge. If he does not, we immediately drop our argument, and shall attempt to proceed with it no farther. Never can *we* believe, any more than the infidel, that God, personally considered, will inflict destructive punishments. But is it not plainly declared, and admitted by unbelievers themselves, that God is a governor as well as a parent, and that he has in consequence to act, not as a parent merely, but as a judge? If this be admitted, we go on to say, that the office of a judge modifies the exercise of the personal feelings of every one who holds it, and creates a necessity of controlling them. They are neither required,

nor permitted, to be the rule of conduct in judicial proceedings. That may be right and honourable in the judge, which would be neither honourable nor right in the man. To cause a person to be executed, for example, as an exercise of private feeling, however criminal the sufferer might be, would be wrong and disgraceful; but the same thing done by a judge in his official capacity, is not only tolerated, but approved. No spectators of judicial proceedings ever thought of depreciating the benevolence of a judge, because he assigned a murderer to the gallows.

But we may go further, and affirm that the judicial character not only justifies what would otherwise be unjustifiable, but compels what may be most unwelcome and painful. We need not confine ourselves to the principle that a judge is not *called upon* to interpose his compassionate feelings on behalf of a criminal, but may add that he is not *at liberty* to do so. Should the case arise of a judge whose tender feelings would not allow him to administer the severer parts of the law, he would be required to resign an office for which he was incompetent; or, having occasion to try a prisoner for whom he had a particular friendship, should he suffer his private feelings to pervert public justice, he would be hurled from his seat with universal indignation. There is no way in which a judge can maintain an upright or honourable character but by controlling his feeling of pity, and steeling himself for the discharge of sterner duties. Ancient history transmits to us with applause the name of one father, who had virtue enough on this ground to pronounce the condemnation of his son; and of another, who, to combine the exercise of his parental feelings with fidelity to the public weal, when his son was sentenced to lose both his eyes, took part of the punishment by surrendering one of his own.

We need nothing more than that these obvious illustrations should be applied to the proceedings of the Supreme Governor. Most readily we allow that, if left to his own feelings, he would inflict no destructive punishments; but, when he comes to act the part of a judge, he will not only be justified in doing, but constrained to do, what his own feelings would never have impelled, and might have strongly counteracted. He will have laws to administer; and, having assumed the character of a judge, he must administer them

faithfully, whatever penalties he may have to inflict. If he were not to do so, he would cover himself with indelible disgrace, and would stand rebuked by the unflinching uprightness of many a human tribunal. As to the remission of sins, therefore, under the moral government of God, it is plain that nothing can be expected from his mere goodness. Allowing him to be infinitely the most benevolent of beings, he not only may punish, but he must; and that, not only though the criminal be his creature, but although it were his Son. Do we not know, indeed, that his only-begotten Son once stood in the sinner's place, and that the tenderest of fathers "spared not" even him? And, if he spared not his own Son, when there was no constraint to lay punishment upon him but such as rose out of the principles of judicial righteousness, how shall not the same principles lead to the inevitable punishment of every transgressor? What sinner flatters himself that God loves him better than his Son, whom, nevertheless, when he stood charged with sin, he unhesitatingly slew?

We are told, however, that, if nothing may be expected from the mere goodness of God, there are grounds upon which reasonable allowance may be anticipated for sin.

It is said, for example, that, since the world in which God has placed us abonnds with temptations, and since our nature, as made by him, contains passions which are easily wrought upon, it would be unreasonable if he were to be extremely rigorous in his treatment of us, and not to allow something for the force of circumstances attributable to himself.

Many parts of this representation we allow in a moment. It is undoubtedly trne, that the scene of our existence presents numerous incitements to evil; that our passions are quickly inflamed, and of great power when they are so; and that God himself both gave us these inflammable passions, and placed us in the midst of these powerful stimulants. But, before it can be shewn that these things require an allowance to be made for sin, it must be shewn likewise that God has not endowed us with faculties, and supplied us with means, adequate to the maintenance of our purity. To say that he has put us into circumstances in which, if we are holy, we must achieve it by effort, is nothing to the point. This no more than harmonizes with the entire aspect of our existence, which is a state of moral trial, and in which there-

fore the presence of inducements to sin is of course supposed, or else there could be no trial of virtue. And although it may be unwelcome, or even painful, to us to be brought to such a trial, neither is this any thing to the point. Whether it is pleasing is one thing, whether it is equitable is another. And this is now the question before us; namely, whether the trial to which God subjects us is so ordered, that, if we fail, it may fairly be reckoned our own fault, without any allowance being made for our failure.

What we have to ascertain, therefore, is simply this: whether, having exposed us to incitements of evil, God has furnished us with sufficient means of resisting them, and of cultivating and maintaining righteousness in defiance of them. If he has not we shall make no attempt to sustain the argument, but shall at once candidly acknowledge that an allowance ought to be made for sin; if he has, we may of course take it for granted that none will be required.

In this place I must beg to refer to a preceding Essay, in which I have treated of the nature and capacity of man, and have endeavoured to shew that we are not so constructed as to be necessarily the victims of our passions; but that, on the contrary, we are endowed with a faculty of controlling them. Our feelings always correspond with the objects on which our attention is fixed; and, as we can fix our attention at pleasure, so at pleasure can we regulate our feelings.

If it be asked how far this power extends, it may be replied that the limit of it can scarcely be assigned. We can give to almost any object almost any power over us, by fixing on it a degree of attention proportionately intense. But what is required by our present argument is to determine to what extent it may fairly be *demanded* of us that this power of self-control should be exercised. And our affirmation is, that we may fairly be called upon to exercise self-control to an extent corresponding with the *just force* of the motives set before us. The equity and reasonableness of such a principle are obvious. To an extent corresponding with its *just force* due consideration will give to every motive infallible power; so that, in fact, to require us to feel the just force of any motive is but to require us to give it a due consideration—a requirement against the reasonableness of which it would not appear that any objection can lie. Having made us capable of consideration at pleasure, what

can our Maker more justly demand? And while he calls for no more consideration than the subjects presented to us deserve, how can the extent of his demand be regarded as excessive?

We come to examine, therefore, whether God has set before us any motives to holiness, and what they are, and whether they are equal or superior to those which move us to sin; for upon this point the remainder of the argument turns. If he has allowed us to be surrounded with motives to evil, without presenting to us, not merely equal, but superior motives to good, then we may claim an allowance at his hands. Now how stands the case? If, on the one hand, God has placed us in the midst of incitements to sin, we know that, on the other, he has presented to us motives to righteousness. In what plain and emphatic terms he has spoken to us of our duty; setting forth our relation to him on which it is founded, shewing its connexion with our own happiness both here and hereafter, and exhibiting the weighty rewards and punishments by which our conduct will ultimately be recompensed! These, in a few words, are the objects which he sets before us in order to counteract the influence of earthly things, and to engage us to a conflict with our sensual passions. Are they of sufficient force? Are the reasons why we should resist temptation as strong as the reasons why we should yield to it? Are they stronger? What a question! It is just asking, Is right preferable to wrong? Is the soul more precious than the body? Is eternity more important than time? Undoubtedly they are; and, whatever reasons may be adduced why we should indulge in sin, the reasons are unutterably stronger why we should avoid it. Up to this point, therefore, we find the requirements of our Maker most reasonable. He does not expect us to conquer temptation without supplying us with motives of adequate power.

It has often been pleaded that the motives to sin have a great advantage over the motives to holiness, inasmuch as they are derived from present and sensible objects, and thus make a direct appeal to the senses themselves. This is undoubtedly true. But it is to be recollected that our intellectual constitution capacitates us, by reflection, to give a present existence and reality to distant, future, and spiritual things; and, being endowed with such a capacity, we are

justly called upon to exercise it. The power of reflection is intended to balance that of the senses; and, if duly employed, it will effectually do so. It is by far the mightier power, and is fitted for the dominion it is expected and required to achieve. Besides, if the motives to sin have an advantage in their present and sensible nature, the motives to holiness are of far greater intrinsic power, and are, therefore, with the greater fairness, employed as a counterpoise to inferior objects. Does any man mean to say that, because eternity is yet to come, and the knowledge of duty makes no appeal to the senses, therefore it is reasonable to live in sin?

The conclusion to which our argument conducts us is this: that God has placed us in the midst of conflicting motives, some leading to sin and some to holiness; that the motives to holiness are far more numerous and weighty than the motives to sin; that it needs nothing but due consideration to give every motive an influence proportionate to its real weight; and that, therefore, a due consideration of the motives presented to us will infallibly make us victorious in the conflict. If these things be so, it cannot be unreasonable that we should be expected and required to conquer. If we have not done so, instead of calling for allowances from our Maker, we have only to accumulate blame upon ourselves. For what, indeed, can any allowance be demanded, when the whole cause of our failure has been a voluntary and perverse inconsiderateness?

It is very likely that I may have failed in carrying the convictions of irreligious men along with me in this argument. The idea that they sin from the force of circumstances, and that some allowance would be reasonable, is so agreeable in itself, and so necessary to their comfort, that they not unnaturally cling to it with tenacity. But the subject, at all events, demands an immediate and an impartial consideration. Let the argument be tried at every point: if it is inconclusive, destroy it; if otherwise, revere the truth. I am quite willing it should be tried also by the test of experience. Reader, inquire of *your own* experience. You have yielded to the influence of present and sensible objects; but have you tried the power of divine and future ones? Have you ever thrown yourself into the conflict with your passions at all, and brought to your aid, by earnest and persevering meditation, the powers of the world to come?

If you have done this, and have given to the various topics of divine truth the attention they deserve, and they have failed to move you, then you may cast the blame upon your Maker, and require at his hands an allowance for your iniquities; but if, on the contrary, as you probably well know to be the case, you have yielded your mind as well as your passions to the world, and have left unheeded for all practical purposes the grand considerations which were adapted to control its power, you must take censure to yourself. You are hitherto an exemplification of the truth of our argument; and, until you try the power of habitual and earnest thoughtfulness, you can never prove it to be false, or escape from the charge of inexcusable criminality under which it brings you.

I am aware that an allowance for sin has been thought reasonable on another ground, namely, the depravity of our nature, contracted before we were born, and brought into the world with us; a very important topic which I must reserve for the succeeding Essay. In the mean while, let us recollect the ground over which we have now gone. You acknowledge, my dear reader, that the law of God you have not kept, but broken. You are told that for this, justly and honourably on God's part, you may, and must without an atonement, be sent to eternal perdition. We admit that the annunciation is awful; but, if you are trying to evade it by imagining that so dreadful a punishment cannot be deserved by you, that a God of love can never inflict it upon you, or that the force of circumstances requires an allowance to be made for you, be assured that none of these imaginations can be verified. Consider the grounds upon which we have proceeded; ask whether we have departed from perfect fairness; and, while you require an adherence to common sense on our part, do not abandon it on your own. If you find reason to think that you do stand justly exposed to everlasting peril, why should you disguise it from yourself? If the fact really be that future punishment, with all its terrors, is no more than your disobedience deserves; that God, with all his goodness, not only may inflict it, but must not forbear; and that, notwithstanding the utmost force of circumstances, you are utterly without excuse; have you not cause for deep anxiety and alarm? Do you mean to encounter such a ruin? Is it not a matter of urgent and imperious necessity to flee

from the wrath to come? Should not the voice of mercy be heard by you with bounding gratitude and joy, and should not your heart submit to it without hesitation or delay? The truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is faithful and worthy of all acceptation; why should not *you* accept it? Behold, now is an accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation: and to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart!

ESSAY XI.

HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY.

We have already stated that, although God in his mercy does not mean to inflict an inevitable punishment upon transgressors of his law, he holds them justly subject to it; and that, even in the very attitude of forgiveness, he maintains that he might, not only without injustice but without unreasonableness, execute the full judgment denounced against the sinner. It is not at all surprising that irreligious men should object against so unpleasant a representation, and endeavour to repel, or, at all events, to evade it. It inflicts too deep a wound on human pride to be welcome. Some of the pleas by which this painful conclusion is resisted were noticed in our last Essay; and without repeating our remarks upon them, we proceed to one which yet remains.

It is imagined that, if an allowance for sin may not be made on any other ground, it may well be expected in consideration of the depravity of our fallen nature. "It is a doctrine of revelation itself," we are told, "that our nature is corrupt, and that the taint of sin is communicated to us from the guilty parent of our race. Now, if we sin in consequence of this natural and hereditary depravity, in the production of which we have had no share, and which, therefore, implicates *us* in no fault, can it be reasonable to deal with us in such a case according to the extreme rigour of the law? And will not our righteous Maker, who knows whence our corruption has been derived, feel the propriety

of the question, How can he be clean that is born of a woman?"

To obviate the apparent difficulty thus frankly and, I hope, fairly stated, we shall not have recourse to any attempt to get rid of the doctrine out of which it arises. We do maintain that all the posterity of Adam are corrupt from their birth, and that this corruption is derived from our first parent's fall. If we were not to retain this sentiment, we should reject as much of unquestionable fact on the one hand, as of Scripture testimony on the other. We take it to be an unquestionable fact, for example, that all men do sin. Not that we are disposed to accuse mankind indiscriminately of profligate courses. Allow all that can be claimed for human virtue; still, when we consider that sin lies in the estrangement of the heart from God, and in the preference of other objects to his glory, it is obvious that in this respect the most virtuous of mortals have been utterly criminal. Such, at least, is the entire testimony of observation and of history. Exceptions to this rule would have been sufficiently remarkable to have been noticed and recorded, yet, we read of one solitary exception alone; and this is found in the person of one "born of a woman," indeed, but not a descendant of Adam, and him the wondering world hated, persecuted, and slew. This actual iniquity, moreover, may be traced, not only through every clime and through every age, but through every period of our rational life. It is to be found in the earliest developments of character, and amidst the fascinating smiles and the seeming innocence of prattling childhood. So soon as ever moral truths are brought to bear upon the feelings of a child, and he makes a choice between himself and his Maker, he invariably prefers his own pleasure, and disregards the sense of duty to God.

Such being the fact, it is not only fair, but necessary, to ask how it can be accounted for. Whence has the universal iniquity arisen? From accident? This is but an unphilosophical way of accounting for any thing; but, if it might *happen* that some men are evil, surely it might have happened also that some would be good. Is it of mere accident that sin should be absolutely universal and uniform? "From the influence of example, then," says the arguer for the uncorrupted state of human nature; and we readily allow that

the influence of example in the diffusion of iniquity is great. But, before we can allow it to be adequate to the solution of the problem now in hand, we must know whence the first evil example could have arisen, and why good example has not sometimes been followed as well as evil. So far as the example of our first parents could operate, inasmuch as they appear to have been immediate penitents, its influence must have been holy: how then has iniquity attained among their posterity such a universal prevalence? We see no conclusion to which, philosophically speaking, and apart from revelation, any thinking man can come on this point, but that there exists something, under whatever name, in fallen humanity, from which this uniform iniquity arises. Since every stream from this fountain of many issues is polluted, it is an obvious and inevitable inference that the fountain is polluted too.

When we push our inquiries further, and ask whence this taint in our nature was derived, philosophical induction no longer renders us any aid. It may have pertained essentially to our original structure, or it may have been superinduced by subsequent causes. And as, on this point, we must seek information from the inspired records, so their testimony is ample and decisive. God made man "in his own image," according to Moses; or, in the words of Solomon, "God made man upright." How then did he become corrupt? By the commission of sin. And, being himself corrupt, he begat sons "in his own likeness," so that all his posterity bear to him in this respect a melancholy resemblance.

While, however, we are indebted to divine revelation for the communication of these facts, there is nothing in them at which, when known, reason or common sense can revolt. If it was a part of the arrangements connected with the probation of our first parents, that, upon disobedience, they should not only forfeit the favour of God, but destroy their own rectitude, there is evidently a most admirable congruity in such a provision; inasmuch as it would have been most painfully incongruous and inconceivable, that, if the transgressors had retained a holy temper, they should have been subjected eternally to the treatment of unholy persons. It may seem, indeed, not to have necessarily followed that the commission of one sin should have corrupted the nature of man. We are familiar with instances in which, when a fault has been committed, the feelings speedily return to their

right channel, and restored rectitude evinces itself by unfeigned repentance. How happy would such a revulsion have been in the case of our first parents! And why was it not so? Because it seems to pertain to a state of original holiness, that it must either be preserved inviolate, or be totally lost. If a creature who is bound to God by ties of moral power once breaks them, according to the principles on which it has pleased the Creator to act in the constitution of such creatures, he appears to be inevitably thrown loose from the tie he has broken, and surrendered to the impulses to which he has voluntarily yielded. Thus it appears to have been in the case of the fallen angels, and thus in the case of disobedient man; and I do not know that it can be shewn to be unreasonable.

As to the communication of this depravity to his posterity, it plainly results from the fact that our first parent stood as our representative. What he might gain we were to gain, and we were equally to lose what he might lose. Had the covenant of Eden been carried into strict and direct execution, this mischief, like all others issuing from the fountain of Adam's sin, would have been confined within the smallest possible compass by the immediate death of the transgressors; but, as a new and merciful dispensation provided for the continuance of their lives and the existence of ours, so this corruption of nature prolongs and extends its influence. It is not, like the legal liability of Adam's race to share in his punishment, done away by the very fact of instituting a state of mercy; but, on the contrary, it is permitted to remain. It is among the elements of our moral trial; and it is both a reasonable and an interesting question whether it renders our trial unequal or unfair. This question we will now proceed to consider.

If the hereditary depravity of our nature does render our moral trial unequal or unfair, we conceive it must be on one of two grounds: it must be either, in the first place, because we are held liable to punishment on account of this depravity itself; or, in the second, because it is a disadvantage in our dealing with temptation which we have not adequate means to overcome.

Let us take up the first of these suppositions, and inquire whether our Maker holds us liable to punishment on account of our hereditary depravity. For my own part, I readily

admit, that, if this be the case, it does supply a strong and valid reason why God should allow a mitigation of judgment, that this depravity is brought upon us without any fault or any concurrence of ours, and indeed, by a dispensation of his own. I am well aware, also, that the sentiment under examination has been affirmed by a large class of eminent divines, after the manner in which it is found in the articles of the Church of England, which maintains that "the fault or corruption of man's nature" "in every man that is born into the world doth deserve God's wrath and damnation." (Art. IX.) I must express my full conviction, however, that the sentiment is altogether unscriptural and untrue. I will state my reasons for this conviction.

Desert of punishment is an idea which attaches itself, necessarily and exclusively to a conscious and voluntary *agent*. If a being who is so made and situated that he may justly be expected to do right should do wrong, he may deserve blame; but to talk of sin in the abstract, or of "the fault and corruption of man's nature" "deserving God's wrath," is nothing less than absurd. That which is not voluntary can have no desert, whether of good or evil. In accordance with this principle are all the declarations of Holy Writ. "*The soul that sinneth* shall die. The wrath of God is revealed *against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.*" And in every case it is against the deeds and feelings of men, and not against their *nature*, that the denunciations of truth are directed. As to the phrase which speaks of us as "by nature the children of wrath," a reference to the context will instantly shew that the apostle intends deeds of sin wrought under natural impulses. Now, if it be true that no punishment is or can be deserved but by a conscious and voluntary agent, then none can be deserved by an infant, since on moral subjects he is not yet an agent at all.

If I am reminded that *sin* is declared to be in our nature, and asked if I can conceive of sin without desert of punishment, I reply that the term *sin* is used in the Scriptures in a twofold meaning, and that the difference requires to be observed. The apostle gives us one very distinct definition of it, when he says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." In this sense sin is inseparable from desert of punishment. But the word is plainly used in a different sense by the psalmist,

in the language, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Here, as I suppose, David is referring to the corruption of his nature; but certainly not to any of his transgressions of the law. To sin in this sense, I conceive, no desert of punishment can be attached.

Should it appear mysterious how sin in any sense, or depravity, or moral evil of any kind, can exist in our nature without desert of punishment, light may perhaps be thrown upon the subject, by referring to the wide distinction between what may be called *active* and *passive states of the mind.* To be angry is one thing, it is plainly another to be irascible; it is one thing to be afraid, another to be timid. When we are either angry or afraid our feelings are in action, but timidity and irascibility are not active states; they are passive, or quiescent states of mind, constituting an aptness for active feeling, but implying no actual feeling themselves. Now, all men acknowledge that timidity and irascibility are evils; but who thinks of blaming them, or of blaming any person for them? If any one allows these or similar evils to come into action without vigorous watchfulness and restraint, then he is blameworthy; but otherwise these are matters of temperament and constitution, which may be much regretted, indeed, but never can be censured. One might as reasonably blame a man for being born with one eye, as for being born of an irascible temperament.

Now our hereditary depravity is plainly a passive, and not an active, state of the mind. In an infant it is obvious there is no choice between God and himself, but there is in him a predisposition to self-preference; something which will render him liable, when his feelings are appealed to, to choose on that side. This is truly an evil, and a very deplorable one; but on no principles of common sense or common life can it be made a matter of blame.

If I am called upon for a word by which to express the idea I wish to convey, I do not know that I can suggest a more appropriate one than that which I have elsewhere employed,* the term *bias.* Bias, strictly speaking, is the weight inserted on one side of a bowl, to divert it sufficiently for the purposes of the game from a straight course. It is a passive property of the bowl. The insertion of the bias has

* Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion.

no effect to turn the bowl from a straight line until it is put in motion, though then it will do so. Such I conceive our hereditary depravity to be, a bias to evil. And, if any one should still insist that a bias to evil is an evil bias, and must deserve punishment, I only say, then let the evil bias suffer the punishment it deserves; but let the punishment be *confined to the bias* which does deserve it, and let not an atom of it fall upon the poor unfortunate innocent in whom it is, not only involuntarily, but unconsciously lodged.

No sentiment appears to me to rest upon stronger grounds of Scripture or common sense, than that which I have thus endeavoured to maintain. To affirm that the babe new-born upon any ground whatever deserves God's wrath and damnation, is revolting to human nature, and, if that be religion, is well fitted to generate infidelity. Let the infidel know, however, that such a notion is held in as utter abhorrence by us as by him; and let every man know that, if he is ever punished, it will be, not for the depravity with which he was born, but for neglecting the control to which he ought to have subjected it.

We now take up the second of the questions lying before us, and ask whether this new element added to our moral trial makes it unequal and unfair.

We have already seen that our Maker calls upon us to set our affections on him, amidst the seductive influences of many other objects; and we have endeavoured to shew that he does this without injustice, inasmuch as he has supplied us with means and motives sufficient for the end. We now find that he calls upon us to make this right choice, not only in defiance of external inducements to wrong, but of an internal propensity to wrong. It seems that we are born with a bias to evil, which manifestly gives an advantage on the side of inducements to evil when they are presented to the mind, and renders it more difficult to resist them. All this we admit without controversy. Nor do we complain of it as unnatural when any person says, in contemplation of these facts, "Would it not have been enough if with an upright mind I had been required to contend with the multiplied temptations by which I am surrounded; and is it not more than can be reasonably expected that I should conquer foes without, when combined with perpetual treachery within?" Let us fairly examine, however, whether there is any real force in this representation.

In the first place, taking our hereditary depravity by itself, it is manifestly open to an effective control by the powers with which we are endowed. Allow that we have a bias to evil, and that, when any inducements to sin are set before us, we find ourselves predisposed to entertain them; it is plain that consideration of such topics as may be adapted to counteract this propensity is a fit, and will be an effectual, method of controlling it. We know from the incessant recurrence of the fact, that all constitutional tendencies—such, for example, as irascibility and timidity, which have already been referred to for illustration—are subject to our own regulation in proportion to the efforts we make for this purpose. A timid man emboldens himself in particular cases by reflecting that there is no reason why he should be afraid; and an irascible man often prevents an ebullition of anger by a moment's consideration of its folly and its guilt. So likewise, when we find ourselves influenced by a predisposition to prefer our own pleasure to our Maker's, this may be repressed by calling to mind how many reasons there are why we should make a different choice. Upon this principle I rest the whole case. If it can be made out that we are not capable of regulating our hereditary depravity by reflection, I admit that an allowance ought in reason to be made for the iniquities to which it leads; but if, as I have stated, we are endowed with faculties equal to its control, then nothing unfair is required of us.

I may, perhaps, be allowed to illustrate the case by another reference to the subject from which I have drawn the term *bias*. He that has to aim a bowl at a distant point, has to contend in the first instance with the inequalities of the ground; but he has to contend likewise with the bias of the bowl itself, which, as soon as it is put in motion, deviates incessantly from the straight line. Hence, no doubt, arises a greater difficulty; yet not such an one as to render the game of bowls impracticable, but only such as to exercise the skill of the player. What would be thought of any man who should exclaim against the bias as an unreasonable impediment, and declare that he would have nothing to do but with unbiassed bowls? Yet this is just the language of those who demand an upright, or unbiassed, nature as a requisite of reasonable trial, and exclaim against the bias or depravity which we bring into the world with us as improper and

unfair. It is true, that we have to aim at the mark with a biassed bowl; but the whole question is whether, with due attention and attainable skill, we may not allow for the bias, and arrive with certainty at the goal.

If any should maintain that hereditary depravity is not effectually manageable by reflection, I should demand the reasons by which such a sentiment could be supported. For myself I know of none. I cannot hesitate to admit that the existence of a bias in our nature which our voluntary powers could not control, would at once place us in circumstances of unequal conflict, and reduce our being to a most melancholy aspect. Upon that supposition, we shall have been made compounds of physical and voluntary forces, not that the voluntary may control the physical, but that by the physical the voluntary may be sported with and overwhelmed. Such a constitution of any creature is utterly incredible.

In order more distinctly to see, however, whether our hereditary depravity does render our trial unequal, let us inquire wherein the conditions of an equal trial consist. Under what circumstances and conditions should we allow ourselves to be justly called upon to act in a prescribed manner? We might clearly require, in the first place, that the motives presented to us to induce such prescribed action should be amply sufficient, both in their intrinsic weight, and in comparison with any which might exist of an opposite kind; in the second place, that we should have a capacity of duly apprehending and considering them, so as to appreciate their force; thirdly, that, when considered, there should be no impediment to their operation upon our feelings, and the corresponding formation of our choice; and lastly, that, when our choice was made, nothing should interpose to prevent its execution. All these things are obviously indispensable, and if any of them were wanting, we should justly enough object to the demand; but *nothing more is needful.* If these points are observed, all is fair; and, of whatever kind other circumstances may be, so long as they do not affect these conditions, they can afford no cause of complaint.

Now we ask whether our hereditary depravity does affect any of these conditions. Does it, in the first place, throw such a weight on the side of evil, that the motives to good thenceforth become inadequate? We admit that the existence of a bias to evil may require the exhibition of stronger

motives than might otherwise have been needful; but does the evil bias of mankind need stronger motives than God has actually presented to us? Let any person who has looked at them say, whether there are not reasons enough why every man in his senses, however depraved, should love his Maker; and whether these reasons are not adequate to overcome the bias of self-love, as well as the fascinations of the world.

Does hereditary depravity destroy our capacity of reflection, and render us incapable of appreciating the motives presented to us? I readily admit that it renders us *unwilling* to reflect on subjects of a holy tendency, and so renders it less easy; but this is a different matter. However unwilling we may be to reflect on any particular subjects, we may still be as able to do it as ever; and so I conceive depraved man to be in reference to divine things. Loath to attend to them, he is yet competent to do so. For the capacity of understanding and consideration is one of our rational faculties; and how a bias of any kind is to destroy it, or to occasion any other obstacle to its action than unwillingness, it seems impossible to conceive. Indeed, it is manifest that the faculty of reflection, even on religious truths, is not destroyed; since no man ever tries to exercise it without finding it in existence.

Does hereditary depravity, then, prevent the influence of our thoughts upon our feelings? Is it one of its effects that we may meditate on the most touching religious truths without being moved by them? If this were the case, it must have made marvellous havoc in our rational structure. Our understanding and our feelings are closely linked together by our Maker's hand; too closely, I conceive, for any bias to separate them. But what is the fact? Our bias to evil makes us loath to dwell upon spiritual objects; but do they ever fail to act on us when we do dwell upon them? Never. Bear witness all the uneasiness which thoughts of eternity have generated in the minds of ungodly men. Bear witness even this very unwillingness to think; for why should a wicked man be loath to entertain thoughts which had no power to disturb him in his sins?

When, therefore, our feelings are wrought upon and a right choice formed, does our depravity interpose an obstacle to action? Manifestly not. This, again, would be a viola-

tion of our rational constitution. Unless subject to external restraint, we invariably do what we choose. If, when we have purposed one thing, we do another, it is not because we have acted contrary to our choice, but because certain feelings had intervened to alter our choice before the period of action arrived. Under the influence of whatever bias to evil, no man sins but of his own choice. The bias tends, not to make us act contrary to our choice, which is impossible, but to make us choose evil rather than good.

We come, then, to this conclusion, that our hereditary depravity does not interfere with any of the conditions of a fair and equal trial. Although we have this difficulty to contend with in addition to that of external temptation, our means of victory are sufficient, and we are therefore justly required to conquer. Our native corruption supplies us with no excuse for sin, and demands no allowance for it from our Maker.

I am willing that the principle I am maintaining should be put to further trial, by being applied to an extreme case. Whatever depravity may be born with us, depravity of far greater amount is produced by long habit in sin. Take the confirmed drunkard, for example, whose customary intemperance for half a century has induced a bias to intoxication of immense power; does any man imagine that this bias forms an excuse for his present drunkenness? It would do so if it destroyed his power of reformation; but who hesitates to say to him, "If you would but consider yourself, you would break off these miserable ways?" In like manner our bias from God, though strengthened by a long life of sin, affords no extenuation of sin to life's latest hour, because consideration will at any moment induce conversion. And if this be so, how competent must consideration be to the regulation of the native bias, the force of which is greatly inferior to that of the acquired!

Let me now recall the reader's attention to that which I have been endeavouring to establish. We teach you, dear reader, from God's Word, that you are a depraved creature, and inherit from your disobedient first parent a bias to evil. You say then, that this ought to be considered in mitigation of your treatment as a sinner; but we answer, No. If you had been duly considerate, you might have effectually resisted it, though combined with temptations from without. No

allowance is to be made for it, because the trial to which it has subjected you has not been unjust. You have failed in it only because you have been voluntarily thoughtless; and that is the essential and inexcusable wrong for which no apology can be admitted. You stand before God, therefore, not only charged with sin against him, but bearing the whole criminality of that which is laid to your charge, and subject to the whole vengeance denounced against it. Your situation thus becomes unutterably awful. You have accustomed yourself, perhaps, to diminish the prospective terrors of the coming judgment by imagining that you had an excuse in your right hand. You have persuaded yourself that it never could be reasonable for God to inflict everlasting punishment upon those whom he suffered to come into the world depraved, and placed in the midst of so many temptations; and, as you have entertained a belief that, whatever might be said now, your Maker would certainly not do any thing unreasonable at last, so you have cherished a persuasion that you will not really be punished with severity. But, on the principle which I have been endeavouring to establish, your condition is altogether changed. You have now no cloak for your sin. Upon the clearest principles of sound reason and common sense, you are justly chargeable with the whole amount of criminality alleged against you; you have no plea of extenuation to offer; with the mouth of every other sinner, yours also is stopped, and you are constrained to become guilty before God. You have no longer a word to say why the vengeance written should not, to the last drop, be poured upon your head; and you can no longer have any pretext for imagining that it will not be done. Realize this prospect therefore. Painful as it is, I beseech you to dwell upon it, that you may be stirred up to escape. For now is an accepted time, now is a day of salvation. If the wicked will forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and will return to the Lord, he will abundantly pardon.

But, if you continue to cherish the delusion to which you cling so fondly, the effect of this will be only to blind your eyes to your approaching ruin, and to harden you against your own soul's welfare. Though you may persevere in cheering yourself with vain imaginations, the day of judgment will still arrive. Though you may cherish the fond hope of escape, the sword of wrath will nevertheless smite you. And

it will smite you in circumstances amidst which all your delusions will vanish. Then you will see all things clearly, and you will feel the justice of your doom, not, indeed, soon enough to cry for mercy, but just in time to acknowledge in agony as you suffer it, "Thou art clear when thou judgest, and right when thou condemnest."

ESSAY XII.

WHETHER CHRIST DIED FOR ALL MEN.

We have been endeavouring to prove to irreligious men, that they really are the men of deep criminality and ill desert which God takes them to be; that, having broken the law of their Sovereign's government, they are righteously subject to its penalty; and that, although that penalty be dreadful beyond utterance, it is not beyond their desert to suffer, or inconsistent with God's honour to inflict. Thus to stop every mouth, and to rend away from transgressors the slender but tenacious hope by which, chiefly, they love to cheer their melancholy condition, might seem to be a sorrowful and ungrateful task; and so indeed it would be, if the extinction of this fallacious light were to leave the sinner in total darkness. Our object, however, is by no means to shut up the guilty to despair, but to direct him to the avenue of hope, and, by demonstrating the righteousness of his condemnation, to prepare him for the glad tidings of pardon. For, like the herald angels of a distant period, we too bring good tidings of great joy; and announce with gladness the truth well attested, and worthy of all acceptation, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief of them. Hear it, therefore, ye children of woe, and heirs of condemnation! "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hear it, and *feel* it too! For a more touching motive to repentance cannot possibly be presented to you.

Men of bold irreligion and cherished scepticism, however,

true to their great design of escaping, if possible, the influence of every thing adapted to divide them from sin, or to reconcile them to God, meet us even here with evasion and objection. "According to the general doctrine," they say, "this provision of mercy on which you lay so much stress has no reality. It is a mere semblance, and might be called a mockery, or even a fraud: for we are taught that Christ died for the elect only, and not for mankind at large; so that, whatever punishment we may have subjected ourselves to, if we happen not to be of the chosen, we are left to the endurance of it without any interposition of mercy on our behalf. What appeal, therefore, can be made to us on this ground, unless you can first shew us that we are of the elect?"

The point thus mooted is one on which irreligious men are entitled to make the most rigorous inquiry, and to demand the fullest satisfaction. The concerns of eternity call for the most perfect frankness and candour; in none can evasion be less admissible, nor can any one stand less in need of it than the God of our salvation.

In order to show that, although Christ did not die for all men, his death nevertheless lays a foundation for universal appeals, it has been customary with some persons, whose sincere conviction and excellent motives I am far from impugning, to say, either that all men may be called because we do not know who the elect are; or that it is enough if Christ's death is sufficient for all men, and if he actually died for those who actually come to him; or that, as he died for all who will believe in him, so every man who believes may know that Christ died for him in particular. I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not adopt any of these representations. They are not satisfactory to my mind; and I could not adopt them without a consciousness of endeavouring by artifice to extricate myself from a difficulty, from which, after all, I should feel it impossible to escape. In the principle of the objection which is now before us, I perfectly agree with irreligious men; and I frankly acknowledge my conviction, that, if the premises are correct—namely, that Christ died for the elect only—they conclude justly that for the non-elect there is no provision of mercy, no warrant for faith, no possibility of salvation. It appears to me that, upon this ground, they may effectually evade the motives to

repentance drawn from God's mercy, by saying, "You cannot affirm that there is mercy for me. Perhaps there is not. Possibly I am one of the number abandoned to their fate; and, if so, you exceed the limits of truth in saying a word to me on the subject." All that could, in my opinion, be consistently said in reply to such an objection would be, "*Perhaps* you are of the elect; and, if you are, God will have mercy upon you. At all events come and make the trial." Now, though it might be better to have this to say to a sinner than nothing at all, it is far from constituting the direct and influential appeal at which I have aimed, and which I think the Scripture both warrants and exemplifies. If more can justly be said to a sinner than this, it is our duty not to rest satisfied here.

While, however, I make this concession, with a fulness of candour which I trust irreligious men will estimate, as to the correctness of their conclusion *if the premises be true*, they, on the other hand, will readily agree with me, that it must fail *if the premises be false*. If it can be shewn, that, instead of dying for the elect only, Christ died for the whole world, then they will surely admit that the provision of mercy has a character of universal reality and truth, and that it is adapted to appeal with great power to the heart of every man. Now, we do deny altogether the premises on which the objection rests; and maintain, as we hope to shew on scriptural authority, that Christ died for the whole world.

To clear our way in this argument, and to avoid at the outset one of the principal objections to the sentiment we plead for, it may be important to say, that the state into which we conceive the death of Christ brings *all* men is not one of actual, but only of conditional benefit; a state of merciful probation, in which our deliverance from sin and its consequences is connected with, and suspended upon, the voluntary exercise of our own minds. In this light it is distinctly exhibited in Sacred Writ: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" The establishment of such a system of gracious probation, the putting of men into this state of conditional hope, is here declared to be, not indeed *the only*, but *one* design of the death of Christ; and it is that with which exclusively we have now to do. There may be, and doubtless there are,

other purposes which so vast an expedient as the blood-shedding of the Son of God is intended to answer, and these may refer, either to Christ himself, or to any portion of the race of man; but, whatever the character or the number of such purposes may be, they cannot in the least degree affect our present argument, if it be true that, in addition to them, Christ's death was intended to establish that system of universal and gracious probation of which we have spoken. Hence we are not at all thwarted by passages which inform us that Christ gave himself a ransom for the sheep, to whom also he gives everlasting life, and that he gave himself for us that he might redeem us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; any more than we are by those which teach us that he died to glorify his Father, and that he endured the cross for the joy set before him. Undoubtedly these declarations are most true and excellent, and infinitely remote be it from us to diminish aught from their glory; but then it is also true, and not in the slightest degree inconsistent with the foregoing Scriptures, that Christ did by his death establish for all men a state of merciful probation and conditional hope. Let this be admitted, and it is all that we want in order to bring the provision of mercy into a universal bearing on mankind.

That to this effect Christ did die for all men, might be sufficiently apparent from the direct testimony of the divine word. Nothing can be more direct than a passage already quoted: "God so loved *the world* that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To this may be added the text which teaches us that Christ "gave himself a ransom *for all*." In a preceding verse the apostle says that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." We are told elsewhere that Christ "tasted death for every man;" that, as "the lamb of God," he "taketh away the sin of the world;" and that he is the propitiation "for the sins of the whole world."

I know that these and similar passages are interpreted by those who hold that Christ did not die for all men in a manner consistent with their tenet; and that, in this as in many other cases, the ingenuity of theological disputation has rendered almost useless an appeal to the letter of Scripture. Every man, of course, feels that he must have some way of

interpreting passages hostile to his views; and the fact that different, and even opposite, interpretations have been adopted as satisfactory by different parties, is a proof that some of us have lost the spirit of simplicity in appealing to the authority of Scripture, and substituted for it the far easier method of accommodating it to our sentiments. In the case before us, however, we ask, what would any man think of the passages quoted, if he had never heard that Christ died only for the elect? We ask further, why do any persons reduce these passages to the import that Christ died only for the elect, but because they have previously believed that doctrine, and feel it therefore necessary to limit texts which apparently contradict it? That is to say, the very sentiment which is to be brought to trial by the language of these texts, is made the criterion for determining the interpretation of the texts themselves! First interpret the text according to the doctrine, and then try the doctrine by the text! All that is honourable and honest, all that is due to God's word and to our own welfare, forbids such a proceeding.

We allow that, when diverse passages of Holy Writ happen to be interpreted in a manner really contradictory, the one interpretation or the other must be modified, in order to attain the harmony which undoubtedly exists in the Divine Oracles; but the sentiment we derive from the texts which declare that Christ died for the whole world is not inconsistent with any other passages of Holy Writ, and a qualification of it is, therefore, both unnecessary and inadmissible.

From direct Scripture testimony let us turn to obvious fact, and see whether the universal reference of the death of Christ is not implied in the present existence and circumstances of the human race itself. Man at first was placed under a covenant in Eden, which he broke; and, if that covenant had been acted out, he would not have survived his transgression a single day. How came it not to be acted out? What suspended the threatening, and allowed the perpetuity of our species? Surely not justice, but mercy; and a dispensation of mercy founded exclusively upon the revealed and anticipated sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every human creature born into the world, therefore, is born by virtue of the death of Christ. Now, it is essentially of the nature of this second dispensation that it is a new trial,

a fresh probation, another season of hope and opportunity, to be improved instead of that which has been lost. Such it was to our first parents, and such it is likewise to their posterity. Can it indeed be supposed, that, by virtue of so wonderful an interposition as the death of Christ, we should be introduced into a state of being which would afford us an opportunity of sinning, but deny us an opportunity of repentance? Existence in that case would be a direct and inevitable curse, not a gift of benevolence, but a compulsory and unmitigable calamity; whereas the death of Christ is an act of pure and infinite benevolence, and all its tendencies are to happiness. Christ, therefore, it is obvious, must have died for every man, and to the intent and effect of putting every man in a state of conditional hope and salvation.

The same conclusion results from the present forbearance of God towards actual transgressors. Every sin deserves punishment; why is it delayed? On any principle of justice? Clearly not. The sparing of a sinner for a single moment is an act of mercy, and an act of mercy which men at large participate. But upon what is it founded? Undeniably on the death of Christ; and to this the apostle himself refers us, in order to shew the righteousness of God's forbearance. The very fact that a sinner lives, therefore, is a proof that Christ died for him; for if it had not been so, he must have died himself as soon as he had sinned. And what the design of God's forbearance is we are expressly told. It "leadeth to repentance;" it is intended both to afford an opportunity for it, and to supply a motive to it. Hence, therefore, we conclude, as before, that the effect of Christ's death is to put all men into a state of conditional hope.

Let us now turn to another topic, and see upon what principle God works, if I may so speak, in administering the system of which his Son's death is the foundation. The nature of it may be expected to be in this manner unequivocally manifest.

We find him, accordingly, issuing invitations and encouragements to some of the children of guilt and woe, to come and receive the blessings his love has provided. And not only so. We find him adding authority to entreaty, and commanding some men to repent. We find him, likewise, asserting the efficacy of his Son's death for a sinner's salvation in some cases; and to some of those who may perish

notwithstanding attaching the guilt of rejecting salvation, and the corresponding punishment of the crime. It is plain, therefore, that God acts upon the dispensation founded in Christ's death as one of real probation.

But what persons does he comprehend in it? Whom does he invite and command? Whom does he reprove for unbelief, and whom will he punish for it? Absolutely *all men* by whom the Gospel is ever heard or known! There is not in any of his appeals the slightest limitation or distinction, or the least intimation of any kind that one portion of the world is more interested in them than another. Hear the language of his invitations: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Listen to his voice of authority: "But now God commandeth all men every where to repent." Attend to the solemnity of his sanctions: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." Mark how the punishment is in every case attached to unbelief: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the Son of God."

Now, if, as appears to us unquestionable, God works the dispensation of probational mercy in a universal manner, this surely demonstrates the universality of the dispensation itself. Will he invite all men if all men are not welcome? Will he enjoin upon all men what is not the duty of all? Will he reprove men without distinction for a fault which some of them cannot have committed? Or will he ascribe the future ruin of any man to a cause to which it cannot have been owing? It would seem to be a matter of obvious propriety, that encouragements and injunctions, rebukes and punishments, should be applied strictly to the parties to whom they belong. For myself, I confess that nothing would seem more safe, or more imperative, than to give the Almighty credit for a perfect accuracy and consistency of conduct, an entire accordance between the system he has to administer and the method in which he administers it; but, if by any persons it is conceived to be otherwise, let us at least inquire upon what grounds such a painful opinion can be entertained.

It does not appear that any thing in this case can be

referred to ignorance, or that our Maker can be supposed to invite or reprove incorrectly because he does not know who are the parties properly implicated. To say nothing of the perfect knowledge which he, of course, in all cases must possess, the case supposed is one in which he invites all men to come to him for mercy, and reproves all men for not coming, at the very time when he must know (if this be the fact) that he has provided only for a certain number, and has had no intention of kindness whatever towards the rest. Here is charged upon him, therefore, not a mistake, but a conscious and intentional deviation from candour and from truth; a thing which, if true, is unutterably painful, but which, while God is holy, cannot be true.

In order, with as little violence to our feelings as possible, to estimate the amount of impropriety thus indirectly ascribed to the Most High, let the matter before us be illustrated by some parallel cases drawn from human affairs.

Let us take it, in the first place, as a matter of invitation and encouragement simply. We suppose, then, that, during a famine, a wealthy and benevolent person has found means of providing supplies of food, and that he issues a general and public invitation, importing that whosoever will may come and partake of his bounty freely, at the same time having no intention whatever that the people at large should partake of it, but having absolutely limited his kindness to a select number. What kind of conduct is this? Could it be deemed honourable, candid, or true? Would it not be considered by every man mean, fraudulent, and false? But look from its principle to its effect. It would naturally bring crowds of the hungry indiscriminately to the door; not, however, to have their expectations realized and their wants supplied, but to be told that nothing was meant but a select party, and that the general invitation was—an imposition and a lie. In what light would the author of such an invitation ever afterwards be regarded? Or what man would have the hardihood to risk such an exhibition of himself?

We may be told, indeed, that the author of salvation is safe from any such result, because he knows beforehand who will come at his call, and that they are precisely the persons whom he means to entertain. This, no doubt, is true; but what then? It seems, then, that we are to regard the Almighty as taking advantage of his foreknowledge of

the stubbornness of men's hearts, in order to act in safety a part which is base in principle, and on which otherwise he never could have ventured. Is this a light in which the friends of God can be pleased to represent him?

We may be informed, likewise, that the death of Christ is *sufficient* for the whole world, though it is not *intended* for any but the elect. To resume our comparison, therefore: if the supplies procured in the famine were sufficient for the entire population, but were not intended for their relief, but only for the selected number, of what advantage could this sufficiency be? Should any but the contemplated persons solicit a supply, the obvious and imperative answer would be, "Indeed, there is plenty for all; but there is none for you." The whole of the practical question relates to the intention of the donor. The very point of every petition would be, "When you authorised such an invitation, *did you not mean* that I should have some food?"

Such a proceeding as we have supposed, a general invitation with a select intention, would be the more extraordinary because it must be deemed totally unnecessary. Nothing could probably be more easy than to convey the invitation to the parties really interested in it, either privately, or publicly by the annunciation of some distinctive sign; and, if so great an inconsistency as an indiscriminate call should be resorted to, one could not fail of asking *why*. If it were that the author of the feast wished to magnify his bounty beyond its real amount, (and one scarcely knows what other conjecture to form,) it is but a paltry object, attainable only while the farce is maintained, and recompensed with a corresponding dishonour when it is closed.

It is yet more remarkable that any persons should have ascribed such a proceeding to the author of salvation, because there is not allowed to him the benefit even of a temporary concealment. Those who maintain it to be a scriptural truth that Christ died only for the elect, cannot ascribe even a present apparent sincerity to the general invitations of the Gospel, or postpone the discovery of their inconsistency to a distant day. According to them, the conduct of God resembles that of a man who should publish a universal invitation, and say at the same time that it was meant only for a few. If the antecedent measure would indicate meanness, such a consummation would be ludicrously and incredibly absurd.

The Gospel call, however, is not merely a matter of invitation; it is likewise the voice of authority. For the illustration of this aspect of the question, therefore, we take up the character of a sovereign, and suppose his subjects to be in rebellion against him. The king, being gracious, has published an amnesty, a proclamation, in which it reads that he has devised a method of restoring the rebels to his favour, and that whosoever signifies his submission shall be forgiven; hereupon he adds his royal injunction that the rebels do all submit themselves forthwith, declaring that he will hold every one who does not submit, not only chargeable with his own ruin, but guilty of a new crime, and subject to an additional punishment. To complete the parallel, we have to add that the method of pardon is nevertheless intended only for a portion of the rebels who have been in the first instance selected, and that the benefit of it cannot, under any circumstances, be extended to any other persons.

Now, let us here observe the unqualified manner in which it is asserted that every rebel, upon accepting the amnesty, shall be pardoned. This is not only stated, but employed as a motive to induce one and all to submit themselves; and yet, it seems, it is not the fact. If universal submission were to follow, some, indeed, would be pardoned, but not all; for those who had not been selected for this purpose, notwithstanding their submission as required, would still find themselves left to condemnation. Is this anything short of misrepresentation and falsehood? Yet in a similar manner we are commissioned to "preach the Gospel to every creature;" and to say, "He that believeth, and whosoever believeth, shall be saved." What is this short of falsehood, if there be any man who, though he were to submit himself, could not be saved? But, if there be any man for whose salvation Christ's death was not conditionally intended, this must be the fact.

When we are told that the Scripture declaration is made good by the circumstance that none but the elect will believe, and that therefore all who believe will be saved, we cannot but deem it both an unusual and an artful employment of terms. The plain meaning of Scripture every man would unquestionably take to be, that the benefit of salvation was really attainable by him on the prescribed condition of faith, and that nothing but the fulfilment of the condition was

wanting to attain it. If the language is covertly used in any other sense, it is nothing better than an artifice, unworthy alike of the cause of truth and the discourse of upright men.

To proceed with our illustration. The king commands the whole body of rebels indiscriminately to accept an amnesty, which, in intention, refers only to a part of them. Is this common sense? That it is the duty of those to accept it who are comprehended in its provisions, is clear; but what can those have to do with it whose case it does not contemplate? The command is not so much unrighteous, as absurd. Suppose it should be complied with by the whole body, so far as the selected persons were concerned all would be right; but, when the others came forward, they must clearly be told that they were not comprehended in the amnesty, which they had nevertheless been commanded, under pain of death, to accept.

And if the command be absurd, more absurd, and even horrible, are the subsequent steps. If one of these rebels not included in the amnesty should fail to accept it, he is not merely to be executed as a rebel, he is to be held guilty of a new crime, he is to suffer an additional punishment, and to be taunted with having rejected forgiveness; while, at the same moment, he may point to the fact, which even the judge himself will acknowledge, that he was not comprehended in it, and that, if he had sought its benefit, it could have done him no good. The supposition is absolutely monstrous. Many absurd and unrighteous things as have been done by earthly tyrants, under the name of law or by the authority of kings, nothing to be compared with this can be found in the entire records of human wickedness and folly.

To mitigate this fearful aspect of the case, we are again told that Christ really died for all who believe in him, and that this is enough. And enough indeed it is for the salvation of those who believe; but, in the Scriptures, there are consequences resulting from the death of Christ to those who believe not. They are accused of rejecting him, and are punished for rejecting him: "He that believeth not is condemned *because* he hath not believed on the name of the Son of God." And Christ's dying only for those who believe in him is *not enough* to put unbelievers into this condition of additional guilt and aggravated ruin. If Christ did not die

for those who perish, and yet they are condemned for not believing in him, they are condemned not for a real but for a fictitious crime, and upon an arbitrary and groundless imagination. They might with as much justice be sent to perdition on the charge of having burnt the world.

Yet these are, to the best of my understanding, fair illustrations of the conduct implicitly ascribed to the most holy God, by holding the sentiment that Christ died for the elect only, if it be allowed at the same time that Gospel invitations and commands are universal. So certainly have these consequences been seen to follow by some divines, that they have been constrained by a sense of consistency to deny the scriptural existence of general invitations or precepts to believe in Christ, and in their preaching to abandon them. Whether in this respect they have not departed from inspired wisdom I freely leave the reader to judge; but their conduct is a clear acknowledgment of their conviction, that, if all sinners be invited and commanded to receive Christ, he must have died for all. How any persons who hold that Christ did not die for all, can yet enjoin, or even invite, all to come to Jesus, except by a thoughtless inconsistency, I confess myself unable to conceive. If I thought the Bible was written on such a principle, it would fill me with the deepest melancholy; not only as sapping the foundation of my own eternal hopes, but as subjecting my adorable Lord and Redeemer, in my estimation, to everlasting shame. It is of no use to say that his ways are not to be judged of by ours, for he himself authorizes a different principle. He is continually appealing to our ways for the vindication of his own, and we are entitled to say that what is base in his creatures cannot be honourable in himself. Whose heart that loves him would not bleed, to think that his ways cannot bear examination by the principles of acknowledged rectitude and common sense? Who that longs for the triumphs of the cross would not repine, that infidelity should have the shadow of a sanction for calling the blessed Gospel a delusion and a juggle; while we can only refer for its vindication to a distant day—a day too, in which, if it be a juggle, Christianity will but encounter the more overwhelming shame! There is nothing for which I more fervently bless God, than that I am not constrained so to regard it. I see that he speaks to sinners, and that he authorizes me to

speak to them, as though Christ died for every one of them; and I speak without a blush, without a quiver, because it is testified that he did give himself a ransom for all.

And through what necessity, let me be allowed to ask (for it must surely have been through inevitable necessity alone,) through what necessity have the friends of God consented for a moment to exhibit his character in so melancholy a light? They see that Christ died for the elect for the purpose of their actual redemption, and of course, for such a purpose, for the elect only; and therefore they have thought it necessary, at all risks, to deny that he died for all men for any purpose whatever! I appeal to every man of common sense, whether they have not herein committed a great oversight of scriptural truth, and whether it is not abundantly evident, that, in addition to the more special purpose he has in view towards a portion of mankind, he has established a merciful probation for the whole. There is not a shadow of inconsistency between these two truths, and, in combination, they accomplish every thing. While the former secures all that pertains to discriminating grace, the latter affords full scope to universal probation. How much is it to be lamented that the oversights of good men should be permitted so extensively to disguise the aspect of divine truth, and give to its adversaries an occasion of contempt!

If I am now asked whether I give up the doctrine of election, I answer, No. In its province I maintain and honour it, but I hold that God's merciful probation of man is not its province. In this respect the intention of Christ's death was universal, and without discrimination. It was no matter of election with God for whom his Son should die in order that whosoever believeth in him should not perish; nor is it a matter of election with him now whom, upon repentance, he shall save. He "gave himself a ransom for all."

We may here perhaps be addressed in the language of needless alarm. "But you do not mean to say that any for whom Christ died will perish?" Undoubtedly we do; and it is plain that to be consistent we must do so. But why should this be thought either painful or unscriptural? If none perished for whom Christ died, how could any of those who perish be charged with rejecting him, or be declared to have perished only because they did so? The groundless and inconsiderate alarm which is, in some quarters, either

felt or feigned on this point, arises from the notion that Christ intended nothing by the shedding of his blood but the actual salvation of men; and in that case, no doubt, the conclusion would be just, that none for whom he died, that is, none whom he meant to save, could perish. But, as we have shewn, one end of Christ's death was to place men in a state, not of actual, but of conditional salvation, of probationary hope; and it belongs to the very nature of such a state that those who are comprehended in it may be either lost or saved. No doubt, therefore, a great number of those for whom Christ died are undone, because they misimproved their opportunity of salvation; and this without the blood of Christ having been shed in vain, since the purpose of its being shed was, in this case, nothing beyond the establishment of a probationary state, which has actually been established for all men, and which answers its design towards all, both those who are saved and those who perish. In this instance, therefore, the object of the death of Christ is as fully attained as in any other, although many of those placed by it in conditional hope come short of salvation.

If by these observations it has been satisfactorily shewn, that, in so far as relates to a state of probationary mercy, the death of Christ is not of restricted but of universal reference, I might now address myself to the conscience of the reader, were it not that the very establishment of this truth may probably give rise to a new evasion. "Well, then," it may be said to us, "if Christ did die for all men, then all men are safe. Surely we shall not be sent to hell after Christ has died to redeem us from it!"

It appears, then, that whatever view of divine things is presented, unbelievers are determined to find objections to them all. Whether Christ did die for all men, or did not, they are resolved that either alternative shall supply them with an excuse for their sins. But let us examine briefly this new specimen of perverted ingenuity. Why should it be conceived that since Christ died for all, all must be saved?

If, on the one hand, this should be expected from the love of God, which, since it has been so great towards sinners as to lead to the death of his Son in their stead, can scarcely be supposed to permit him to destroy them,—we answer that his love is controlled by his justice; and that the severity

with which he slew his Son is a pledge of the inflexible righteousness which he will administer to his foes.

If, on the other hand, unbelievers should look for impunity to the justice of God, inasmuch as satisfaction for sin, which has been once made by the blood of Christ, cannot be exacted likewise of the transgressor himself, we answer that they entirely overlook the conditional nature of the transaction. The death of Christ is only one of a series of steps by which a sinner's salvation is to be attained. Insulated and apart from other steps it has no efficacy whatever. Its actual influence depends partly on what goes before it, namely, the sanction of the judge; and partly on what comes after it, namely, the acquiescence of the criminal. Take away the first, and it could not have established a conditional hope; withhold the second, and it cannot confer an actual benefit. No man is really the better, therefore, through Christ's having died for him; he *may be* benefited by it, but his actual benefit depends entirely on his embracing the Saviour, without which he as truly perishes as though Christ had never died. "He that believeth shall be saved, and *he that believeth not shall be condemned.* Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy; but, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" As no medicine can act unless it be applied, as no friendly interposition could withdraw a traitor from punishment who refused submission, so not even the death of Christ avails to rescue any man from wrath who rejects the Saviour. To such persons it is as though there had been no sacrifice for sins; and to them there remaineth nothing but a fearful looking-for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

The conclusion at which we arrive is this: that, through the precious blood of Christ, which has been shed for all men in order that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, there is a method and opportunity of escape for every sinner; but that it needs to be embraced by repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. I conceive myself, therefore, to address an irreligious man; and I say, Sinner, you have ruined yourself, and, by iniquities for which there is no excuse, you stand exposed to righteous and everlasting punishment. But, through God's mercy, there is hope. Without artifice or equivocation, there is hope *for you.* Whether you may be of the elect or

not, there is equal hope for you; a real provision for your salvation, and a most free welcome to your application for it. Only submit yourself to God's method of mercy by his dear Son, and *you* shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life.

This state of things appeals powerfully to your self-love. Wrath is before you; but so likewise is a refuge. Will you not flee to it? Can it be a question with you for a moment, whether you will or will not escape from eternal condemnation? If your coming ruin were a matter of compulsion or necessity, that would be a different case; but it is actually made to you a matter of choice. Of heaven and hell you may have either, and you alone have to decide which it shall be. And can you hesitate? You that flee so eagerly from every temporal calamity, do you derive no impulse from the prospect of one which is eternal? Is it then a light evil which awaits you? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Oh! what is the stroke of almighty vengeance that you so resolutely expose yourself to its infliction, and repel the hand which would withdraw you from the blow?

Your condition appeals not less powerfully to your generosity. Your Maker, indeed, after the manner in which you have treated him, is not the being from whom you might expect favour. You have not loved him, but, on the contrary, have treated him with most aggravated unrighteousness and unkindness: yet he has loved you. Behold how much! He has *so* loved you, as to give for you his only-begotten Son. Realize this fact. Remember that it is a reality, and dwell upon it until you feel a measure of its proper influence. Is this the Being to whom you have been an enemy? Are you an enemy to him still? And do you mean to be so for ever? Are you resolved to deny him the friendship which he seeks so tenderly to win? Or is it not too much, even for you? Surely, melted into gratitude and shame, you are already saying,

> "Come, let me love! Or is my mind
> Hardened to stone, or froze to ice?
> I see the blessed Fair One bend,
> And stoop to embrace me from the skies.
>
> "I was a traitor doom'd to fire,
> Bound to sustain eternal pains:
> He flew on wings of strong desire,
> Assumed my guilt, and took my chains.

"Did ever pity stoop so low,
Dressed in divinity and blood?
Was ever rebel courted so,
In groans of an expiring God?"

Or, if it be not so, what is your character, and what must be your doom? You, who can rush into hell of your own choice, when all the blessedness of heaven courts you in vain; you, who can resist the condescending importunity of your Maker, and set light by the precious blood of his Son; what will become of you? Verily, the wrath you have chosen shall be recompensed into your bosom. And, at the great day of retribution, in what an awful light will your character be exhibited! The despiser of mercy—the refuser of salvation—the man who might have escaped, but would not! How justly and inevitably will you perish! How will you stand the marvel of the assembled universe! And will any creature pity you? Impossible. While, on the one hand, all holy beings, in deep and solemn sympathy with their insulted Maker, will exclaim, as they behold your fall, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord!" the unholy, on the other, will triumph in your infatuation, and add their scorn, with a fiendish gladness, to the elements of your endless torture. O reader! will you die such a death? Will you spend such an eternity?

ESSAY XIII.

THE NATURE AND PRACTICABILITY OF REPENTANCE.

When, in our preceding Essay, we had been endeavouring to demonstrate to ungodly men that the mercy of God by Christ Jesus actually comprehended *them*, since Christ gave himself a ransom for all, we found occasion to warn them that this mercy needed to be embraced; and that salvation, although thus munificently provided, if neglected, would still be lost.

It would not be unnatural or unreasonable, if, upon such a statement, we were asked to explain more particularly what

it is that God requires us to be or to do, in order to secure that deliverance from the wrath to come which, by the death of his Son, is presented to our hope. The Scriptures furnish us with an answer to such a question perfectly direct and explicit. "God commandeth all men every where to repent." Upon this condition iniquity shall be blotted out, but not otherwise. "Except ye repent," the same authority declares, "ye shall all likewise perish."

Still it requires to be asked, however, what it is to repent; for, familiar as the word is, it may be doubted whether it is generally used with a distinct apprehension of its meaning. The term itself, indeed, being not of English but of foreign derivation, is not very well adapted to convey any meaning; and, wanting a translation itself, it is somewhat unfortunately chosen as the translation of a word in a different tongue. For this reason I may, perhaps with the greater propriety, refer to the original language of the New Testament, with a view to ascertain the import of the term actually employed.

Two words used by the sacred writers our translators have rendered by the one English term *repent*, though the ideas conveyed by them are of considerable diversity. The one is, *μεταμέλομαι*, which signifies *to be sorry afterwards*, as Judas was, when, having betrayed his Lord, "he repented," as our translation renders it, "and hanged himself." The other term is *μετανοέω*, which primarily means *to consider afterwards*, and thence, by a natural transition, *to effect such a change in our minds as reconsideration is fitted to produce;* or, in brief, the meaning of *μετανοέω* is *to alter one's mind.* Now this is the word employed by the Sacred Scriptures, in all cases when they speak of what God requires of men in order to salvation. "Repent ye (alter your minds) and believe the Gospel." "They went out and preached that men should repent (alter their minds)." "Testifying repentance (altering of minds) towards God." "God commandeth all men every where to repent (to alter their minds)." "Except ye repent (alter your minds) ye shall all likewise perish." There is no difference at all among learned men as to the meaning of this word; and it is no hazard, therefore, to affirm that it ought to have been so translated. How much ignorance, perversion, and mischief, would have been prevented if it had been so!

The English term *repent* is derived from the French *repenser*, which means *to reconsider*, and which thus accurately conveys to a French ear the meaning of the original. And not remote from it will be found the idea attached by ourselves to this word, as it is used in the discourse of ordinary life. When, having done any act, or expressed any intention, we say afterwards that we have *repented* of it, we mean, for the most part, that, on reconsideration, we have *altered our mind* respecting it. This phrase, *altering or changing the mind*, we readily understand; and it will contribute much to the clearness of our ideas, if we put it invariably into the place of the less intelligible word *repentance*.

This then is that which God requires of us in order to salvation. He commands us to alter our minds in relation to himself and our conduct towards him, or to be in a different state of prevailing feeling in this respect from that which we have heretofore cherished. We have cherished feelings of estrangement, aversion, and enmity; he bids us supersede these by the contrary feelings of sympathy, benevolence, and friendship. We have loved sin, he bids us hate it; and upon our complying with this demand he suspends our interest in his salvation.

In reference to the attainment of deliverance from divine displeasure, it is plain that nothing can be more congruous than this requirement. The previous state of our minds being wrong, it is of course right that it should be altered; more especially since it is of that kind which God, as a holy being, must necessarily and unchangeably disapprove, and since it constitutes in fact the very crime against which the denunciations of his wrath are directed. We have already seen that deliverance from the wrath to come is strictly a deliverance from God's disapprobation; and this is plainly impossible, until our character becomes such as he can approve. It is precisely against the enmity of the heart to God that future punishment is directed; and it would be strange indeed if the punishment should be remitted, while the offender is perpetually renewing the crime. It is in perfect harmony with his general proceedings, therefore, that God commands all men to alter their minds, and that he consigns those who do not to an unmitigated perdition.

It is at this point, however, that irreligious men turn upon

us, with an objection which demands a more particular and extended notice. They tell us they cannot repent. Their language is, "To be of a different mind is not possible for us. This would be to change our hearts, and no man can change his own heart. This is God's work, and if it is to be done in us he must give us his Spirit. To require us to do it without giving us his Spirit, is unreasonable and unjust."

Let us endeavour to take up this objection with coolness and candour, and to ascertain whether it admits of a fair and satisfactory reply.

I set out with saying, that in the principle of the objection I perfectly agree. I not only freely admit, but hold as firmly as the objector himself, and as one of the first principles of moral truth, that no man can justly be required to do what is not in his power. And I admit likewise the direct inference from this principle, that, if men have not the power of altering their minds without being moved thereto by the Spirit of God, he ought in all reason, either to give them his Spirit, or not to require the change.

To meet this seeming difficulty, I am not about to say with some that, wherever the Gospel is preached, and the command that men should alter their minds is promulgated, there God does give his Spirit to all men, to enable them to fulfil it. I see no scriptural ground for such a sentiment. On the contrary, I hold it evident that, while God does give his Holy Spirit to some persons, he does not give it to others. Yet he requires all men to repent, even those to whom he has not given his Spirit, and to whom he never will give it; and, without ever having had any intention of giving them his Spirit at all, having addressed to them his command, he leaves them to choose their own course, and means that they should abide by the consequences of it.

Neither, to meet the difficulty now before us, am I about to say, with others, that, although God does not give his Spirit to all men, he will give it to all who ask for it; and that therefore the command to alter their minds is just, because *they might obtain* power to fulfil it. It seems evident to me, that what may be reasonably required of any man must be proportionate, not to the capacity which he may obtain, but to that which he possesses.

I will not disguise my conviction that, if any fair and satisfactory answer can be given to the objection we are now

considering, it must be by affirming that men have power to repent without being moved thereto by the Spirit of God. If I did not think that this might be affirmed with truth, and be maintained on scriptural grounds, I would not attempt to say any thing on the subject; but would remain in afflicted silence, and acknowledge that, however God might ultimately shew irreligious men to be in the wrong, they have on their side at present the verdict of sound reason and common sense. Still, indeed, I should perceive the condition of the ungodly to be dreadful, and still, after the scriptural pattern, I might exhort men to repentance; but I should confess that my exhortations were absurd, and that I could not vindicate them from the scorn of the infidel and the laughter of the profane. If, however, it may be shewn, as I am convinced it may, that, without being moved by the Spirit of God, men can alter their minds respecting him, then I think silence will be effectually imposed upon the objector.

For the sake of greater simplicity, I will suppose myself to be addressing irreligious persons who hold that they cannot alter their minds towards God, unless moved by the Spirit.

I beg to put to you, then, in the first place, a question like that of our Lord to Pilate, when he asked him if he was king of the Jews. "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" How came you by this notion of your inability? Did you derive it from your own investigation of the case? Or have you taken it up on the authority of others.

Putting the Scriptures aside for a moment, pray inform me whether you have been led to this opinion by any observations upon the properties or condition of your own being. As to the simple matter of altering your mind, or purpose, or prevailing feeling, there can be no doubt, since you are actually altering your mind respecting various subjects every day that you live; and that not merely accidentally, but intentionally, by a consideration of the various aspects of duty or interest which may be entertained for this end. I may beg you also to recollect the explanation we have formerly given of the mental apparatus by which we are rendered capable of self-government, in which it was shewn that the state of our mind always corresponds with the course of

our thoughts, and that our thoughts may be thrown into what direction we think proper; so that, having the power of regulating our thoughts, we have the power likewise of moulding our feelings. Now, if the working of this apparatus is competent to alter our minds in one case, why not in another? If it is sufficient in temporal affairs, why not in eternal ones? If you were to take into consideration those relations to your Maker of which you have been so forgetful, why do you conceive that such consideration would not avail to alter your mind towards him?

If you should allege, as is commonly done, that the case of a sinner's mind towards God is peculiar, and not to be reasoned on from analogies of common life, I should require to know wherein this peculiarity lies. I have never heard, and I cannot conceive, of any which bear in the least degree on the question now before us. The exercises of thought by which our feelings towards God are to be modified, are these impracticable? Clearly not. Any man who can think of one thing can think of another. When divine truths are reflected on, do the feelings refuse to answer to them? There is not the least reason for supposing that they do so, but abundant evidence to the contrary. Is it imagined that our feelings of aversion towards God cannot be overcome because they are so strong? But the topics by which they are to be modified are likewise of proportionate strength. Will it be alleged that we are so extremely averse to reflection on religious subjects that it is impossible? We know that aversion does not in any case constitute impossibility; and, whatever may be the degree of it in religious concerns, the force of truth and the dictates of conscience are of superior power, and amply adequate to its control. Again, therefore, I ask, why a competent exertion of our rational powers would not alter our minds towards God.

By the confidence with which it is currently asserted that consideration, even if it were used, would not lead to a change of mind, one might be led to suppose that great numbers of men had made a vigorous trial of the experiment, and by their own experience could testify its failure. This, indeed, if it were the fact, would be a powerful argument. But nothing is farther from the truth. While affirming that consideration would not alter their minds towards God, ungodly men are speaking of that which they have never

tried. Nothing is more remote from their uniform habits than a frequent thoughtfulness of things divine; and they can be little qualified, therefore, to say what its effects would be if it were diligently employed.

It has been gravely alleged, indeed, as an exemplification of the failure of consideration to induce a change of mind, that there have been men of great biblical learning, deep scriptural students, who have spent the days, and almost the nights, of a whole life in the study of the Word of God, who nevertheless have not been converted. The fact is true and melancholy, but the reason is obvious. They studied the Word of God merely as critics, and not for the purpose of self-transformation. They never applied it to such an object. They were like soldiers who should spend their whole time in polishing their swords, without ever lifting them against an enemy. Of course, no enemy would ever fall by their hands; but, if this fact were adduced to prove that their swords would not have killed any one if they had been used for that purpose, we should deem it but inconclusive reasoning.

Even a slight observation of what passes around us might shew, that, in whatever measure divine truth engages reflection with a personal bearing, it invariably produces a proportionate effect. To pass lightly over the known thoughtfulness in which conversion always commences, we may here refer more particularly to the uneasiness which occasional reflection creates in the breast of ungodly men, (which uneasiness itself is a partial change of the mind,) and to the more considerable change which temporary and evanescent thoughtfulness produces, upon persons whom time shews never to have really turned to the Lord. These cases demonstrate the power of consideration so far as it is carried; and what would prevent consideration, if it were carried to a just extent and maintained with due vigour, from transforming the whole man? In truth, there can be no more striking or decisive testimony to the irresistible power of reflection, than that which is afforded by the reluctance of ungodly men to this exercise. They would not be averse to any thing which harmonized with a course of iniquity; why, then, do they dread to think? Why are they so resolved to keep aloof from instruction, and why so eager to banish it from their recollection? Obviously, because

thoughtfulness has so direct and irresistible a tendency to change their minds when they do not wish it, that a determined inconsiderateness constitutes the only chance of keeping their minds as they are.

I may perhaps say, then, to the friends with whom I am supposing myself to argue, There is in the properties and condition of your own being no reason to believe that you are not competent to alter your own minds towards God without the impulse of his Spirit. I ask again, therefore, whence have you derived the sentiment? Is it your own? Or did others tell it you?

You will now probably reply to me, that you have learned it of others, that it is the current doctrine of the pulpit, and that it is maintained by all the reputed sound ministers of the Gospel as the unquestionable doctrine of the Scriptures. Allow me to say, however, without any wish to depreciate my brethren, and most cordially including myself in the sentiment, that it is an injustice to Christianity to take up as true the opinions of its ministers. Religious truth should be drawn from its own exclusive and uncorrupted fount, the Word of God. We may all of us be wrong; and it will be far from rendering an erroneous sentiment either blameless or harmless, that you have imbibed it with the sanction of the whole ministerial order. Set our entire body, therefore, out of the question, and carry your appeal, where we carry ours, to the inspired oracles.

But do not the Scriptures teach the doctrine of man's inability? What makes you think that they do so? They assert that men cannot come to Christ. What else? They affirm that conversion is in all cases, and that in all cases it must be, the Spirit's work. Let us briefly examine these topics.

The Scriptures say we *cannot* come to Christ, and this is adduced as decisive language. Now I confess that I marvel at the tenacity with which this phraseology is appealed to. No term can be decisive of any dispute unless it is uniformly used in one and the same sense. If it is employed in two senses, it is plainly indeterminate, and it requires its own meaning to be ascertained by the context. Now this is notoriously the case with the word *cannot*. Sometimes it is used to denote a want of power; but it is used frequently also to denote, not a want of power, but of inclination

merely. Bid a mother cast her child into the water, and with fresh embraces of her darling she exclaims, "I *cannot* do it;" yet she is as well able to throw her child into the water as a stone of equal weight. In consequence of being used in a double sense, therefore, the word *cannot* is not discriminating, but equivocal; and it proves nothing as to the presence or absence of power, until its meaning in the particular connexion is known. On this account it ought, in all fairness, to be thrown out of the discussion respecting human ability altogether; a continued appeal to it as decisive of the argument is wanting in candour.

When we come to inquire what the word *cannot* does mean as applied to a sinner's coming to Christ, the case is clear enough. Upon another occasion, declaring the very same fact which he had elsewhere announced in the terms, "No man *can* come unto me," our Lord states it in the different, but equivalent language, "Ye *will not* come unto me." Hence, therefore, it is certain, that, in this particular case, the word *cannot* does not denote a want of power, but of inclination only. That this is the inevitable import of our Lord's complaint, may be made apparent by a simple illustration. Suppose you were endeavouring to persuade a man really blind to look at some object presented to him, and, because he did not see it, you were to break out into lamentation and reproof—"I am so hurt that you will not look at it; it is very unkind"—there is an absurdity in the very supposition from which you instinctively revolt. Yet no less absurd must it be for Christ to complain that sinners *would not* come to him, if indeed they *could not*.

But "conversion is always, and always must be, the Spirit's work;" a sentiment which I not only most freely admit, but most strenuously hold. So likewise is the bringing of a thief to prison the work of a constable, or of some one acting a similar part; and, with rare and immaterial exceptions, it always must be so. But why? Because the thief has no power to come there of himself? Clearly not. He has just as much power to come to prison as to go any where else. It is only because he has such a dread of justice that he will rather flee in any other direction. Now, the interference of the Spirit in conversion is precisely analogous to that of the legal officer in arresting a public offender. To bring a sinner to God, and to constrain him to surrender him-

self to divine justice, is, and must be, the work of the Spirit; not because the sinner cannot do it, but because he dreads and hates it. There is no question of power in the whole case. If you give a thief more power than he has, he will only make a more speedy escape; and, in like manner, whatever augmentation of power you confer on a transgressor against God, he will but the more vigorously resist the arrest of his governor and his judge. The admitted necessity of the Spirit's influence, therefore, in no way argues inability in a sinner, but only the greatness of his aversion to God.

With respect to the testimony of Scripture, however, you should beware of imagining that it is all on one side. The capacity of men for right action is implied in the whole system of its exhortations, is made the foundation of the entire body of its parables, and is repeatedly asserted in express terms. According to the Scriptures, men *do see*, though they do not perceive; they *do hear*, though they do not understand. What, then, is the nature of their blindness? The Word of God contains a most explicit guard against misinterpreting its language on this point. We are told that sinners "have closed their eyes, lest they should see, and be converted." This is their whole blindness. And it lays a clear foundation, both for persuasion in the first instance, and for complaint if persuasion be resisted. A man who can see you rationally ask to look; and, if he shuts his eyes in order that he may not see, it affords matter of just, and even of indignant, reproof. Upon this principle, indeed, the Sacred Scriptures avowedly make the whole of their rebukes to depend. "If ye were blind," said our Lord, (and he is no mean authority,) "ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Christ's own principle, therefore, is, that to destroy the capacity of compliance is equally to destroy the criminality of refusal; and that, if "sin remaineth," it is only because, and as far as, power remains.

If it is made apparent to you, dear reader, that the Scriptures do not inculcate the inability of man to alter his mind towards God, and that the current sentiment of the religious world upon this subject has not the sanction of the only competent authority, you may perhaps be ready to bring up your own opinion to its support, and to say, "I think it must be true; for I am sure I would turn to God if I could."

And so, from the fact that you *have not* turned to God, you argue that you *cannot*. But, if the Scriptures be true, you are indulging yourself in a grievous fallacy; for they declare that sinners *will not* return. Put it to the test of a somewhat closer examination. You would alter your mind towards God, you say, if you could. When, then, did you try? When did you take such an aim, and follow it up with any appropriate and persevering efforts? What credit is to be given to the assertion of your wishes, if you have made no endeavour? You have "*prayed* for it." Perhaps so: but have you ever *reflected* for it? And, for the purpose of transforming your feelings, have you ever dwelt upon the compass of scriptural truth, in its length, and breadth, and touching influences? You know that you have not; and that, if you were to say that you wished for any earthly thing for which you have taken no more pains than you have to alter your mind towards God, you would expose yourself to merited ridicule. The obvious truth is, however unwilling you may be to believe it, that you so strongly prefer the state of your mind as it is, that you will not use the means of changing it which are in your hands.

Let me now recall to you what I have been endeavouring to establish; namely, that, without being moved thereto by the Spirit of God, and without any other influence than the blessing which God always gives to the use of means, you are competent to alter your mind towards God by employing the faculties of your own being. Think upon your ways, and you will turn your feet unto God's testimonies. This is what God requires you to do in order to deliverance from his wrath; and, except you do it, without regard to any communication of his Spirit, he leaves you to perish.

In the light thus cast on them, look at the general aspect of God's ways towards you. You have been accustomed to think it hard that he should command you to alter your mind, and yet not give you his Spirit. But, on the principle now maintained, this is no hardship at all. Why should he give you extraordinary help for a duty which you can fulfil without it? Whatever you have power to do it is clearly equitable to require. In your probation for eternity, therefore, although God does not give you his Spirit, he puts you to no unfair or unreasonable trial; and, when he makes your future happiness or misery to turn upon an alteration

of mind made by yourself, without any impulse from him, he suspends it upon no inequitable condition. *You can do it;* and, if you will not, the consequences are your own.

While the ways of God towards you are thus vindicated, one would think also that your activity would be stirred. What momentous issues are suspended upon your own exertions! Eternally you are to live in blessedness or in woe, and it lies with yourself to say in which. Let the state of your mind towards God remain as it is, and you perish; alter it, and you are happy. Are not these moving considerations? Are you not waking from a long sleep of worldliness, to attend to a concern of so much greater moment than all that the world can present to you? Surely you will hasten to your chamber for intent reflection, and as you go you will exclaim, "Away with these trivial vanities! Away with these busy cares! Away with these engrossing sorrows! Away with every thing that would withhold me from the all-important work of inward transformation, or distract me in its pursuit!" Is it not time that you should betake yourself to frequent solitude; that you should look closely into your heart, and acquaint yourself with the evils which need to be cured; that you should consult the sacred page, not for curiosity, not for criticism, but for influential motives, to be brought home to a bosom which so much needs their power? I beseech you to do so. All that is righteous requires it, and all that is happy depends upon it. Or, if you will not, I only ask you, Do you mean, then, to perish; and to perish in the new circumstances which have now been set before you? You have shewn that you could composedly resign yourself to a ruin which, as you thought, you *could not* avoid; do you now mean to shew that you can with equal composure devote yourself to a perdition which you *can* avoid? You were prepared to endure, with a kind of haughty resentment, the stroke of a tyrant; but are you prepared for the commission of suicide? You would not destroy your body; will you destroy your soul? You would not run into temporal calamities; will you plunge into eternal ones? Or, if you will, say at least why it is that you do it. Leave us not in darkness as to the noble object—for surely it must be a noble one—which is, in your eyes at least, worthy of so great a sacrifice. Alas! it is for very vanities, which you are ashamed to acknowledge; for gains,

for follies, and for sins, all of them momentary, and as worthless as they are fleeting. Your conduct is the consummation of madness, and its issue must be in the depths of woe.

Should you, dear reader, be disposed to say, that, as you can alter your mind at any time, you need not be concerned about it *now*, I must remind you, that, even if it can be deferred with safety, it cannot be deferred without sin. Self-transformation is your duty, and your instant duty. "God commandeth" it, and every moment's delay is an additional crime. Are your sins already so few that you are desirous of adding to them? Are you so wedded to iniquity that you will never abandon it, so long as you can commit it without instant perdition?

But delay is as dangerous as it is wicked. For let me ask you to what extent you calculate upon life? "You need not repent to-day:" no, if you are sure of to-morrow. But to-morrow, nay, this night, your soul may be required of you; and then your opportunity of repentance is gone for ever. What is of such vast importance should be done immediately, since there is no work nor device in the grave whither you are going. Or, if life should not be speedily cut off, delay will be an incalculable mischief. What authorizes you to suppose that the heart which is averse to transformation to-day will be favourable to it to-morrow? What reason have you to believe, that, if religion is displeasing to you at fifteen, it will be agreeable to you at five-and-twenty; or that, if you loathe it in middle life, you will love it in old age? Every thing leads to a contrary conclusion. Cherished feelings are becoming incessantly more strong. Every hour that you live in dislike of religion it will become to you more unwelcome, and by delay you are inevitably preparing for yourself a severer conflict, if you are not for eternity riveting your chains. Not only by all that is right towards God, therefore, but likewise by all that is merciful to yourself, I implore you not to delay what it is so important, so necessary, to do. Wherefore should you? Or put to one moment's unnecessary hazard a soul so precious, and an interest so awful?

ESSAY XIV.

THE NATURE AND CRIMINALITY OF UNBELIEF.

A VERY slight observation of the New Testament is sufficient to shew, that, in order to the salvation of a sinner, great stress is laid upon *faith*. It is prominently, and, indeed, exclusively, enjoined, in the commission which our Lord gave to his disciples as their authority and their rule in every age. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The manner in which the first heralds of mercy discharged their functions corresponded with this direction. They said, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." To the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?" when it was put by the jailor at Philippi, and doubtless on all other occasions, they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The leading topic of the apostolical writings is "righteousness by faith," while perdition is declared to await those who believe not. "He that believeth not," says our Lord, "shall be condemned." And on another occasion, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

This suspension of our eternal welfare upon faith has been made the occasion of another objection against the Christian system. We are told by men of sceptical or irreligious habits, that it is altogether unreasonable to attach our welfare to our belief; since belief is not voluntary, but arises necessarily from evidence presented to our minds. "We do not," it is alleged, "and we cannot, believe what we please, but what appears to us to be true; and it is therefore absurd to require us to believe any thing but upon evidence, whether it may be under the allurement of an advantage, or the threatening of a penalty. Men cannot reasonably be held responsible for their belief."

So reasons the rejector of Christianity: and it has been customary to meet him by saying, that in many cases our belief is affected by our feelings, and that in such cases we

are justly held responsible for our belief. There is unquestionable force in this reply, yet I do not mean to lay upon it the stress of my present argument.

How then do I obviate the conclusion? Simply, by denying the premises. The objection proceeds upon the supposition that the Scriptures suspend our salvation upon *belief*, or upon faith in the sense of a belief of the truth, or an assent to the Gospel as true. That this sentiment has been taken from the lips of teachers of religion I admit; but this does not prove it to be the language of the Bible. For my own part, I am convinced that it is not so; but that what is required in order to salvation under the terms faith, or believing, is not an assent to the Gospel as true, but a moulding of our feelings into harmony with it. Faith, as I conceive, is not an act of the understanding, but a state of the heart. If I should succeed in shewing this, which I shall presently attempt, it is clear that the whole power and ground-work of the objection we are considering will be destroyed. "We cannot be held answerable for acts of perception," says the sceptic. Agreed, is my answer: but we may, as your very objection admits, be held answerable for the state of our feelings; and it is with the state of our feelings alone that God has connected our salvation.

In order to shew that what is required in order to salvation, under the terms *faith* and *believing*, is a state of feeling, I refer in the first place to the meaning of the words employed. The word rendered *to believe* is πιστεύω; and the very first meaning given to it in the lexicon* is *to persuade one's-self*, to bring one's feelings into harmony with something perceived. I know that the same word is used on some occasions to denote an assent to truth, but this is its secondary and analogical meaning; its primary and radical meaning is to bring the mind into unison with something perceived. It denotes, not an act of the understanding, but an effect upon the heart. To see how fully this idea is borne out, let us trace the word πιστεύω to its derivation. It is formed from the noun πίστις, and this again from the verb πείθω, the meaning of which is *to persuade*. In the middle voice, πείθομαι, it signifies *to persuade one's-self, to submit, to*

* Schleusner *in verb.*

obey; and, under the word πιστεύω, the lexicographer already quoted says it is the same as πείθομαι.

In full accordance with this derivation, the words πιστεύω and πίστις are frequently used to denote a state of mind, such as expectation, confidence, or acquiescence, corresponding with knowledge possessed: as when the paralytic was let down through the roof, and Jesus saw their *faith;* and when he said to the importunate Syro-phenician, "O woman, great is thy *faith.*" The meaning was the same when Christ appealed to the Pharisees concerning the baptism of John, and they said within themselves, "If we shall say it is from heaven, he will say, Why did ye not then *believe* him," or bring your minds into unison with his mission.

Now, if it be true that the primary and radical meaning of the word πιστεύω is to harmonize the mind with a perceived object, we are both entitled and required to interpret it in this sense unless a reason can be shewn for the contrary.

Our argument may be confirmed by referring to the scriptural use of the term as connected with salvation. If it is sometimes used in a simple form, as when the apostles call on men to "believe the Gospel," or speak of "the belief of the truth," it is frequently employed in a different and very significant manner. We hear, for example, of believing *in* Christ, or *on* him, or of believing *on his name;* and in one place, where our translation conceals it, of believing *in* the Gospel. Now, there could have been no need of these adjuncts, if the writers or speakers had merely intended to convey the idea of an act of the understanding, as in believing Christ, or assenting to the truth. The use of these additional words distinctly and emphatically denotes, that what is required is something beyond assent, namely, a correspondence of the mind with the truth presented to it. This phraseology, therefore, clearly shews that the Gospel, though true, is not the object of saving faith *as truth,* but as exhibiting a method of divine proceeding towards us for our benefit. If the former had been the case, the only appropriate call would have been to believe *it;* but we are called to believe *in* it, to acquiesce or confide in it—a mode of expression which can be referred only to a state of cherished feeling.

It deserves to be remarked also, that while truth, or apparent truth, is the only possible object of faith considered

as an act of the understanding, truth, even "the truth of the Gospel," is not the only object of the faith which is unto salvation. Christ himself is frequently presented to us as the object of saving faith, and we are bidden, not to believe him, but to believe *in*, or *on* him. What can this denote, but the harmonizing of our minds with the measures he has taken for our redemption?

The import of the terms under consideration may be illustrated by a reference to their scriptural synonymes, or to dissimilar modes of expressing the same idea. Whatever the nature of faith or believing may be, these words obviously denote that particular act, or exercise, or state of mind, which is connected with salvation. Now *this* we find represented in a variety of forms. These are some of them. "*Look unto me*, and be ye saved." "*Come unto me*, and I will give you rest." "To as many as *received him* he gave power to become the sons of God." These are metaphorical descriptions of what is elsewhere called faith, or believing; and, whatever they may mean, that also is faith. But it is evident that these metaphors can be interpreted of nothing but a state of mind; *looking*, *coming*, and *receiving*, are names for expectation, dependence, and acquiescence.

Other phrases synonymous with faith are not metaphorical. The Scripture speaks of those who "*received not the love of the truth*, that they might be saved;" of those "who *obey not* the Gospel;" of those who "*have not submitted themselves* to the righteousness of God;" and of "bringing down high thoughts into *subjection to Christ*." Each of these phrases, *to be in subjection to Christ, to submit to God's righteousness, to obey the Gospel, to receive the love of the truth*, is strictly synonymous with faith; but it is obvious that they one and all denote, not assent to truth, but a conformity of the heart with it.

In one place the apostle speaks expressly of "the obedience of faith;" a mode of speech by which he seems to indicate that faith is itself an act of obedience,—and, if so, clearly not an act of the understanding, but a state of the heart.

To these illustrations may be added the testimony of the Scriptures themselves, that belief in the sense of an assent to truth is connected with no benefit whatever. It is of such a faith that the apostle James speaks, when he says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say, I have

faith? *Can faith save him?*" A strange question, one would think, to be found in the Bible; and, at all events, one quite overlooked by the infidel. Every thing is explained, however, when we find him speaking of an assent to evidence; a faith which is as uninfluential upon a man's condition as it is upon his character. Such a faith, it appears, cannot save; and it cannot therefore have been required in order to salvation.

Faith which consists in an assent to evidence resolves itself into mere certainty of knowledge, and cannot be distinguished from knowledge itself. When in this sense we say we believe any thing, all we mean is that we know it with certainty. But no saving benefit whatever is in the Scriptures connected with mere knowledge. On the contrary, knowledge may aggravate guilt, inasmuch as things certainly known to be important and obligatory may be neglected or despised. So our Lord affirms of the Jews, that they had "both seen and hated both him and his Father." If knowledge constituted faith, then knowledge could not consist with unbelief; yet, on the contrary, we know that unbelief is often charged in Scripture upon those whose knowledge was ample, and, indeed, pre-eminent.

These are some of the grounds upon which I entertain a full conviction, that what the Scripture requires in order to salvation under the name of faith is not our assent to the Gospel as true, but our consent to it as a method of mercy; the harmonizing of our feelings with it as a part of the divine proceedings affecting us. Perception and conviction of the truth are implied and pre-supposed by it, but they are no part of it, any more than the perception of the objects we love or dread is a part of the emotions they inspire. If I have made good this portion of my argument, I have broken the force of the infidel's objection so far as the nature of faith is concerned. It is then established that our welfare is not made to depend upon a thing in which we have no choice, that is, upon our assent to evidence; but upon a thing altogether voluntary, namely, the conformity of our feelings with a method perceived and understood. In this arrangement every thing is appropriate, and nothing liable to objection.

But, if the objector should admit that the Scripture so far agrees with common sense as to connect our welfare only

with what is on our part voluntary, he will probably ask us further, whether the particular state of mind on which our deliverance from the wrath to come is suspended is appropriate to the case; whether, in order to his salvation, a sinner can be reasonably required to bring his feelings into harmony with such a dispensation as the Gospel reveals.

Now the reasonableness of our being required to bring our minds into unison with this or any other arrangement, depends upon two things: first, upon the sufficiency of the evidence to satisfy us of its reality; and next, upon the sufficiency of the motives to induce our acquiescence. If there be neither evidence enough to convince, nor motives enough to persuade, we are clearly exempt from any reasonable obligation to mould our feelings accordingly. But can either of these things be affirmed of the Gospel?

First, with respect to its evidence. The facts stated are, that we were under just obligation to love God, which obligation we have disregarded, and have thereby subjected ourselves to a righteous punishment, from which God mercifully interposes to deliver us by the substitutionary death of his Son. Whether these allegations are true or not, is a point which may be determined by a reference to the authority on which they are made. Are they contained in the Bible? And is the Bible the Word of God? The latter question has already been considered by us at large, and answered I trust satisfactorily, in the affirmative; and if so,—if holy men of old did speak as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and if they have declared the things we have spoken,—the truth of them cannot reasonably be questioned. God must know, and we cannot impute to him an intention to deceive.

Or there is another method by which the correctness of these representations may be tried. Some of them refer to alleged facts in our own character and condition; these, therefore, may be easily put to the test. Let the requirements of the divine law be compared with the relation we actually hold to our Maker, and let our own conscience decide as to the justice of our obligation. With the rule of duty well understood in our hands, let us ascertain our own character, and see if it is in any measure less criminal than the Scriptures affirm it to be. With a just conception of the wrath of God, let us try whether it does not fix itself in our estimation as a recompense of iniquity at once appropriate

and awful. Let us put the described method of mercy to the same test, and so bring it home to our own heart and conscience that we may see whether it is efficacious to the pacifying of the one, and the purifying of the other. What is true will by such a method readily distinguish itself from what is false, and it will be seen whether an appeal to undeniable facts within our own bosom will not confirm the statements of the Oracles of God.

We are convinced that, on both grounds, the evidence of the truth of the Gospel will be found amply sufficient; and, if we be then asked why any men are not convinced of its truth, both principle and fact direct us in our answer. According to our principle in the first place, we answer, that it is because the evidence *is not properly weighed;* for, if it were so, we hold conviction to be inevitable. And what, in the next place, is the fact? Are the impugners of Christianity characterized by a spirit of diligent research, and candid inquiry? Are they not, notoriously, either flimsy and superficial thinkers, contenting themselves with retailing other men's cavils; or uncandid reasoners, seeking only after objections, and delighting in magnifying difficulties, while the great masses of affirmative evidence are either slightly estimated, or altogether overlooked? Is it any wonder such men are not convinced of the truth of Christianity? It would be a far greater marvel if they were, and nothing short of a most unaccountable violation of the constitution of the mind, and of all the principles which have ever been known to affect its operation.

If then the evidence of the Gospel be sufficient, what is the power of its motives? Supposing the facts to be as they are stated, do they appeal to my feelings with sufficient force to enable me, by steady contemplation, to mould them conformably? This inquiry, we conceive, must be instantly answered in the affirmative, since the motives by which the method of mercy appeals to us are weighty and touching beyond all which can be addressed to the heart of man. If there is power in motives of any kind, it is in the call of righteousness, in the voice of authority, in the appeal of love. And such in all respects is the call of the Gospel. It is the call of righteousness, since the state of mind it requires of us is strictly accordant with our duty; it is the voice of just authority, since it speaks in the name of our acknowledged

Governor and Judge; it is the appeal of love, since we are besought by the tender mercies of God, in the gift and agonies of his dear Son, to be reconciled unto him. And, if no motives in their nature can be more influential than those by which we are thus addressed, certainly none can be greater in degree. There may be other just obligations, and other manifestations of kindness; but this is most just and most transcendent of all. If the contemplation of redeeming love move not the heart, we may safely affirm that it is out of the power of motive to do so; its whole resources are exhausted there. Yet inferior motives touch the heart; and why should not these? Where is the man who can affirm by trial that they will not? Or rather, where is the ungodly man whose aversion to such meditations does not testify his conviction that they are, and would be, irresistible?

The conclusion at which we thus arrive is, that the Gospel possesses both sufficient evidence to convince, and sufficient power to persuade; and thence we most surely infer, that it is reasonable, both to require the conformity of our hearts to its tenor, and to suspend our welfare on this condition. If the Gospel have sufficient evidence to convince, the due consideration of that evidence would infallibly produce conviction; and, if it have sufficient power to persuade, the due consideration of its motives would infallibly mould our feelings. Hence, therefore, in requiring the conformity of our minds with the dispensation of his mercy, God requires, in point of effort, nothing more than a due consideration of facts and truths made known to us; and, if it be unreasonable to require such conformity, it must be because it is unreasonable to require the consideration which would produce it. But will any man, will even the most determined sceptic, maintain, that it is unreasonable for God, who has made us rational creatures, to require the use of our rational powers?

We shall yet be told, however, that the issues dependent on our fulfilling this demand are unreasonably awful, and the penalty of unbelief unduly tremendous.

Now it is unquestionably true, according to the Scriptures, that, if we refuse to mould our feelings into harmony with the divine method of mercy, we shall both suffer the loss of the benefit it is intended to convey, and expose ourselves to further punishment as for an additional crime. Let us see what in this issue may be deemed unreasonable.

First, for the loss of that deliverance which is conditionally effected for us in the Gospel. It cannot obviously be unreasonable to suspend salvation upon any condition unless that condition is an unreasonable one. The question therefore is this: Is the moulding of my heart into harmony with the Gospel an unreasonable condition of my attaining deliverance from the wrath to come?

We have already seen that such a conformity is not impracticable, both evidence and motive being sufficient for its production. Is it then appropriate? And is it kind, so as to harmonize with the professed aspect of the Gospel as a dispensation of mercy? Unquestionably, it is both appropriate and kind in the highest degree. It is nothing more than to acquiesce in God's method of bestowing an inestimable benefit. Is there any thing in this method which renders it justly objectionable? Does it cast upon us any groundless imputation? Does it withhold from us any due honour? Does it subject us to needless humiliation? Does it require the abandonment of any equitable rights? If these or similar complaints could be brought against the Gospel, it might be a right and a noble thing to refuse submission. But this is not the case. We stand accused, indeed, we are required to be humble, we have to submit to free and sovereign mercy; but all this accords with our real condition, and is the right method for our treatment. If we will not bring our hearts into unison with it, it is because we are determined to retain a groundless self-complacency, and a criminal pride; and, if we choose to do this, we take upon ourselves the responsibility of refusing the benefit. Our case resembles that of a convicted murderer, who should reject a pardon from the hand of his sovereign because it was made out for him as a malefactor justly condemned. His doom be on his own head!

As the condition on which our salvation is dependent is most reasonable in itself, so, it may be added, it is one on which it is right, and even imperative, for God to insist. As a matter of mere kindness it might perhaps be said, "If you mean to do the wretch a benefit, and he will not accept it in one way, let him have it in another." But this is not a matter of mere kindness. It involves important considerations relating to the character, both of God and of man. What would be said, for example, in a case of rebellion

against lawful government, if a rebel would not accept exemption from death as upon pardon granted freely to a criminal, but demanded it as an act of justice to a person wrongfully accused? His life would certainly be forfeited to his pride; and no one would expect that, for his sake, the government should take upon itself a guilt which was not its own. Now a sinner who wants other terms than submission to the Gospel, stands in whole or in part upon his own vindication; and the question is whether, to humour his pride, God shall, or shall not, take causeless blame to himself. Can the answer to such a question be one moment doubtful?

But the character of the sinner is likewise concerned. God is holy; and he cannot extend favour to the impure but in a method which connects itself with the generation of holy character in the transgressor. He cannot provide for the deliverance of an offender from wrath, with the certain prospect of the iniquity being repeated by which wrath has been, and again must be, incurred. He cannot forgive a rebel with his sword in his hand, or with enmity still cherished in his heart. A return to his allegiance, most distinctly indicated by a prompt submission to so reasonable a method of mercy, not only may, but must be insisted on, in order to forgiveness. And again we say of the sinner who refuses it, his doom be on his own head!

What can be said, however, of the superadded punishment with which unbelief is to be visited? Might it not be enough to leave a rejector of the Gospel to the misery he had refused to shun?

We answer, yes, if the rejection of the Gospel were not a new and additional sin. But if it be, then, like every other sin, it deserves and demands a punishment. Now that the rejection of the Gospel *is a sin* may appear from this consideration, that the requirement to submit to it issues from an authority which we are bound to obey. It is God's command. Like his other commands, it ought to be obeyed, and disobedience in this case is not less criminal than in any other. It is a command characterized by the most perfect equity, and in entire accordance with our relations and our condition; and, if we do not obey it, it is only because we prefer persevering in that which is evil. Is this to be met by no disapprobation?

The refusal to obey the Gospel, moreover, is a sin of

peculiar aggravations. It has a reflex aspect upon past iniquity. It amounts to a refusal to repent of preceding sins. It is like saying that we are neither sorry for them nor ashamed of them, and it may be represented as virtually committing them all over again. We have an opportunity of disavowing them, or of expressing our regret for them, but we do not choose to do so; we cling to them, even in the face of the most fearful consequences. In every moment of unbelief, therefore, there is concentrated the criminality of our whole antecedent life; and adherence to sin when time has been had for reflection, is even more criminal than its original commission.

The sin of unbelief has, likewise, a more awful aspect towards God than any other. It is not, like others, a mere rejection of his authority; it is at the same time a contempt of his mercy. The arrangement to which he commands us to submit is one which he has made expressly for our welfare, and for the purpose of conveying to us the most inestimable benefits. He has made it in his own free and sovereign mercy, when we were in a state of utter helplessness and righteous condemnation; and he has carried it into effect by the amazing expedient of the incarnation and sacrifice of his beloved Son. Having done this, he enjoins our submission; or rather, though he might enjoin, he entreats, and sets himself before us in the attitude of importunate request. It is as though God did beseech by us, when we beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. One would think that such a state of things would bring the stubbornest of God's enemies to a stand, and that the proudest of them would hesitate before he resolved on repelling such tender condescension. Yet this is not the fact. The rebels who have defied his authority as promptly and perseveringly contemn his loving-kindness. They turn a deaf ear to every entreaty, they harden their hearts against all persuasion, they trample under foot the Son of God. Criminality cannot be carried to a higher pitch than in these circumstances. Here is ingratitude combined with disobedience, and the most signal and melancholy display of hardness of heart, ungenerousness, and reckless insolence, that can possibly be exhibited. It is only the peculiar condescension of the divine Majesty in his ways of mercy towards men that creates the possibility of such peculiarly aggravated iniquity. The

angels who kept not their first estate are doubtless sufficiently wicked, but all the wickedness of which they may have been guilty stands at a vast remove from the sin of unbelief. Theirs has been only resistance to just authority; no mercy has been given them to despise. Their Maker has not humbled himself before them to entreat them to accept a provision of matchless grace, nor has he allowed them an opportunity of trampling on his Son. This opportunity he *has* allowed to sinners of human kind, and they have seized it; thus carrying their guilt to an elevation to which the whole host of devils might, in vain ambition, have aspired. It is plain that iniquity so enormous not only must be punished, but must be punished proportionately to its guilt; and equally plain, that, if it be so, its punishment will transcend unutterably that of every other crime.

If I close this Essay by addressing myself to an unbeliever, I say, Do not mistake the nature of what is charged upon you as unbelief. It is not that you do not hold the Gospel to be true, but that you do not bring your heart into unison with it. To this, indeed, it is needful that you should be convinced of its truth; but, upon that point, if you will give to the evidences of its truth a thorough and candid consideration, God will be answerable for a corresponding result. See, then, with the utmost earnestness, to the bringing home of its appeals to your heart, in order to your transformation into a corresponding temper. If you will do this, all its benefits shall be yours. But, if you will not, you lose them all; and in your very refusal you commit a new crime, of a magnitude before which all others dwindle almost into nothing. Most solemnly do I beseech you to beware of it. It will make your punishment an amazement and a terror, even in the regions of the lost. All will be wretched; but, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trampled under foot the Son of God!

A TREATISE

ON

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

To this edition of my Treatise on Man's Responsibility I have added as a NOTE a paper on the question,—Is Man Responsible for his Belief? This paper originally appeared in the fifth volume of the MONTHLY CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR, p. 663.

PREFACE.

A FEW details, altogether unimportant in themselves, are necessary to the proper introduction of this little volume to the notice of the public.

Towards the close of the year 1839 I delivered to my congregation at Devonshire Square a series of Discourses on the dominion of God; distinguishing his natural from his moral dominion, and exhibiting, with what clearness I could attain, some of the foundations on which the latter is established. Requests were presented to me from several quarters to print these sermons, which I promptly and resolutely declined, until importunity grew too serious to be trifled with. The force of it was increased by the following circumstances.

I had engaged to deliver on the 26th of December, on behalf of the Christian Instruction Society, one of a course of Lectures to Socialists and others, and my subject was Human Responsibility. This subject was nearly identical with the theme of the discourses I had just been delivering to my own people; and as it involved the use of almost all the same matter (of course, digested anew), and gave some additional importance to the publication of it, I determined not to resist what these combined elements seemed to render a call of duty.

Having mentioned the Lectures to Socialists, I wish particularly to observe, that, although I hope this volume contains matter worthy of their consideration, the subject neither is now, nor was at that time, treated in a manner exclusively adapted to that class of persons. I did not then feel it necessary to adopt such a method, inasmuch as the Lectures were announced as intended for Socialists and *others;* and I did not deem it wise to do so without necessity, because it would have given to the discourse an imperfect, a one-sided character, decidedly adapted to diminish its usefulness. I

resolved, therefore, on treating the subject generally, and on encountering as much the erroneous theologist, as the sceptic or the infidel; and such as was the lecture in this respect is also this Treatise.

The book, however, is far from being a mere publication of the lecture. The size of it will show at a glance that it contains much more matter. This arises from two causes. The first is, that the numerous and important topics which occur, and which, in the space of a single hour, were touched with a painful though necessary brevity, have been considerably amplified. The second is, that, for the sake of a more complete and satisfactory treatment of the subject, additional topics have been introduced. I hope the alteration is in both cases an improvement.

If the volume is not a publication of the lecture, still less is it a publication of the sermons I have been requested to print. It exhibits, indeed, the same views; but it contains much additional matter, and throws the whole subject into a different attitude. In my own pulpit I had to encounter no opposition to the Sacred Scriptures. Upon their authority, therefore, I established the fact of man's responsibility, and proceeded from thence to infer and trace out the features of the divine government. Lecturing to Socialists and others my attitude was different. I had then to argue with men who set aside the Bible, and to show that the elements of which the existence is affirmed or implied in the Scriptures are extant and demonstrable in fact. In the former case I had responsibility to assert, and, with this undisputed, to explore the grounds of it; in the latter, with responsibility denied, I had the nature and condition of man to examine, and to lay bare in them the foundations of moral government. I say this the more distinctly to account to the general reader for the manner in which the subject is treated; begging leave to add, however, that I am far from supposing it for this reason to be treated less usefully.

I do not know that it is a common thing to try to prove the justice of man's responsibility. It is more usual, I think, on the one hand to assert it on the authority of the Scriptures, and on the other to rely on the belief of it which is so readily imbibed and so tenaciously held by the human mind. To one who might inquire whether he was responsible, and how it could be shown, the more frequent reply would

be, perhaps, "The Bible declares you are so; and besides, you know it yourself because your conscience tells you so." I suspect the time is come, however, which calls for a different answer to this question. Unhappily, the very name of the Bible is made by many an occasion of ridicule, and old habits of thought are becoming as powerless over men as the withy bands and hempen cords which for a moment bound the limbs of Samson; religious truths, under the nickname of priestly dogmas, are trampled in the dust, while the teachers of religion are challenged to the exercise of reason, and dragged to the bar of common sense. I do not say that this challenge is always fair; but it is always plausible, and to a certain extent it is just. Neither do I mean to allow that reason, whatever may be called by that name, is the standard of truth, or that whatever cannot be comprehended by the understanding of man is therefore unworthy of belief; but, holding the direct reverse of all this, I may nevertheless affirm that mystery does not envelop *every thing* that is in the Bible, that some of its declarations can be sustained by convincing arguments, and that others are not liable to effectual disproof or contradiction. In whatever cases this can be shown it is surely of unequivocal value; and upon no subject can it be more important, or, as I think, more practicable, than on the subject of responsibility. It is this that I have attempted in the present work. If I have succeeded, I may have rendered some little service to the cause and the Master I love; if I have failed, the TRUTH is just where it was, and will not suffer, I hope, in the estimation of any by the weakness of its advocate.

It may appear to some, that, in the conduct of my argument, I have admitted too much, and that, for the sake of establishing the responsibility of man, I have given up some portions of evangelical truth. On this point I beg permission to say that I have given up nothing for the sake of the argument; but have reasoned upon grounds which I should equally have held to be true if I had had no argument to construct upon them. I beg to say also, that I do not deem any of the points I have given up to be portions of evangelical truth. They may be thought so by others, or they may be portions of a prevailing theology; but this is nothing. The views on which I have reasoned are in my judgment scriptural, and therefore I have stated them and reasoned on

them with boldness. If they be also views on which so important an argument can be most successfully conducted, that is a high additional recommendation of them.

I confess that I feel my entire confidence on this occasion to arise from the doctrinal views which I have adopted, and in holding which I am aware I differ from many. It appears to me to be one of the great misfortunes of the current theology that it presents so many vulnerable points; points which may be not only easily but successfully attacked, and which, I think, against a skilful adversary cannot be sustained. Some of the truths of theology may be compared to military positions held in an enemy's country, the only possible use of which lies in their being capable of defence. To multiply posts which could not be defended would be rather to increase weakness than strength, and could be no proof of skilful management. A good general would rather abandon the points which he could not sustain, and contest only those which he could. It is better to be victorious at one point, than to be beaten at a thousand. Precisely such is the wisdom I could wish to recommend to many divines of the present day. Some sentiments currently held afford to infidels most of the advantages they possess against religion. They present favourable points of attack; and the attacks directed against them are always embarrassing, and often successful. Those who hold them can take no effective part in the conflict. They are like forts of which the guns may be silenced, or troops which may be withdrawn from the battle. It is this, accordingly, which infidels are always employed about—not defending infidelity, but assaulting religion; a purpose for which they take advantage of the untenable positions occupied by its friends. I should not for a moment wish this otherwise, if I were sure that the sentiments so impugned were true; on the contrary, if I believed the Captain of the Lord's host had placed me in an (argumentatively) untenable position, I would hold it faithfully unto death: but so unfortunate a state of the case suggests and warrants an inquiry whether these indefensible sentiments are true. We are at all events under no obligation to encounter defeat for a fiction; nor, for notions of our own, are we justified in exposing either ourselves to discomfiture, or the cause of truth in the world to ignominy and to peril.

Nearly allied as my present subject is to some on which I

have already written, I have not been without apprehension that I might be guilty of tautology, and subject myself to the intimidating cry of "Spoke! Spoke!" I trust, however, that this fault—although it might well be venial with the good in a world where the same errors are repeated so often—has been avoided, if not entirely, yet sufficiently to exempt me from severe rebuke.

Should what I have written be found conducive to sound wisdom and instruction, I shall unfeignedly rejoice. As an effort so intended I solicit the acceptance of it, first of all, by my best friend and adorable Lord—whose glory be promoted by it evermore!—and next, by that attentive and loving flock, who so kindly receive, and, I hope, so considerably profit by, my ministrations.

London, *Jan.* 25, 1840.

ON MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SUBJECT OPENED.

THE doctrine of human responsibility, or that God will deal with men according to their works, is undoubtedly one of singular interest and importance. If it be a truth, it places mankind in a position of momentous peculiarity, as compared with all other inhabitants of this world. It involves the consequence that men's condition hereafter will be very gravely affected by their conduct now; and exhibits both prospects of good and evil, and a challenge to considerate action, to which all creatures on earth besides are strangers. Nor is this all. It is fundamental to many other doctrines, and, indeed, lies at the basis of the entire system of moral government. Upon it as a superstructure is erected the whole machinery of commands and sanctions by which, according to the Scriptures, God has undertaken to rule mankind. If man is responsible, there is in this machinery an undeniable appropriateness, and there *may be* justice: but, if man be not responsible, there cannot be in such a system either justice or propriety; the foundation fails, and the superstructure is overthrown. The subject is of vital importance, therefore, to the entire science of morals and religion.

Our way may be opened by framing for ourselves two questions: the first, Whether God actually holds men responsible; the second, Whether he can be justified in doing so.

The former of these questions is evidently not one for general reasoning. We have no certain means of knowing

what God intends to do but a reference to that happily familiar volume, the Bible, in which all that we are permitted to know in this matter is presented to us as on his own authority. On this part of the subject, therefore, I shall do no more than quote two or three passages from the sacred records. To begin with the language of the Old Testament: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Eccl. xi. 9. In entire harmony with this are the declarations of the New Testament: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. v. 10. "God, who will render to every man according to his deeds —to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath—in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Rom. ii. 6, 9, 16. In these passages the true idea of responsibility is clearly expressed; the sacred writers evidently not confounding it (as it has been alleged that the advocates of the doctrine sometimes do) with punishability, but plainly exhibiting rewardability as an essential and equal moiety of it. Such portions of Holy Writ constitute truly serious announcements, and, if their authority be admitted, they fully establish the fact that God holds men responsible for their conduct, or, which is the same thing, that he will treat them according to it. I know that the authority of these declarations has been set aside by various persons, on various grounds, but it is not for me here to enter upon this topic; I shall only say that it becomes every man to look well to the method in which he disposes of them. If he sets them down as false, and they should happen to be true, he will have fearful and everlasting reason to deplore his mistake.

With these observations we dismiss our first question, and come to the second; which is, Whether God can be justified in holding men responsible for their conduct. Into the consideration of this question we must enter more at large.

We observe, then, generally, that so peculiar a state as

responsibility requires evidently the existence of some corresponding elements in the being who is the subject of it. These need to be of two kinds; one class of them to be found in the nature and condition of the party held responsible, the other in the relations he bears to the party holding him so.

With respect to the latter of these in the case now before us, which is that of man and his Maker, I do not know that a doubt has ever been expressed. Let it be admitted that the nature and condition of man fit him to be held responsible, and it will be allowed on all hands, as I suppose, that the relations which God holds to man as his Creator, the fountain of his being, and the source of all good to him, generate a valid title on his part to hold him so. In doing this he would but challenge the due exercise of the faculties he has given: a proceeding which will hardly in any quarter be deemed open to complaint.

The same agreement does not exist, however, on the other point, namely, whether the proper elements of responsibility are to be found in the nature and condition of man. By some this is denied; and they have not scrupled to infer from the alleged absence of these elements that the doctrine of human responsibility is itself erroneous and untrue. They reason thus: man cannot be held responsible justly; therefore, since God will do nothing unjust, he will not hold man responsible at all.

It may be observed here, that it is not a little hazardous to draw such a conclusion so hastily. We fully admit that God will do nothing unjust, and that he will not hold men responsible if it be unjust to do so; but this is a matter which is not yet ascertained. It is possible that a correct decision of this question may be beyond the reach of human faculties, and that even the most careful and impartial consideration of it might not avail to set it at rest; and it is therefore possible that we may be justly held responsible, although men, even the wisest of them, may not be able to ascertain the grounds of it. Not the whole of truth is within our grasp; and it is neither sound philosophy nor common sense, to argue from our ignorance to the denial of that which we cannot demonstrate. But it is not every one who undertakes to judge of the grounds of human responsibility who treats the subject either wisely, carefully, or impartially. Many think of it superficially, some dishonestly; and for

such persons to infer, some from their own blunders, and others from their frauds on their own understanding, that human responsibility is a fiction, cannot be less than infatuation. In whatever ignorance or perplexity we may be respecting the grounds of our responsibility, nothing can be so safe or so wise as to take the testimony of Scripture to the fact. And even those to whom, on any ground, this may not be satisfactory, may find, if they look either around them or within them, indications not very equivocal of what the Scriptures so plainly assert. On every hand, for example, we see that God is now, to a great extent, treating men according to their conduct, or, which is the same thing, as responsible agents. He attaches happiness to virtue and misery to vice, not, indeed, universally or uniformly, but in so many instances, and with such an approach to uniformity, as to create a strong probability that He who, to such an extent, treats men according to their conduct now will do so hereafter. What is within us leads to the same conclusion as what is without us. The very existence in the mind of the notions of right and wrong, or of praise and blameworthiness, and the invariable association of these latter with their proper correlates; the readiness with which our minds receive these ideas, the tenacity with which we retain them, the constancy with which we employ them, and the extreme difficulty and small success of all endeavours to dislodge them, can be accounted for only on the supposition that such agents as ourselves may justly be held responsible, and that God is so dealing with us. Fictions and falsehoods have no such natural apparatus prepared for their habitation and entertainment. With its representative and associated sentiments so graven and living in the heart of man, responsibility can scarcely be a falsehood; why need we hesitate to call it a truth?

I will admit, nevertheless, that it is both desirable and important, if we are held responsible, to be satisfied that this is reasonable, and to be convinced that the proper elements of responsibility exist. Our acquiescence in the claims which our Creator makes upon us, and our obedience to his various commands, will naturally be facilitated by the clearness of our views on this subject; as they could scarcely fail of being rendered feeble and embarrassed by doubt or obscurity. Nor is it unfair, I will further admit, to assume, that, if God

claims to be our Governor, he may be expected to make the grounds of his government apparent and easy to be understood. Mystery must attach to many parts of his character and of his ways; but it is scarcely to be supposed that he would allow a truth so fundamental to his administration as the responsibility of man to be wrapped in impenetrable darkness. If he means our obedience to be cheerful, this ought to be among the plainest of truths. We, indeed, think that it *is* among the plainest of truths, and under this conviction shall proceed in a fearless inquiry after its evidences and proofs.

We take up the subject hypothetically; and propose for consideration the following question: WHAT ARE THE PROPER ELEMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY; or, WHAT ELEMENTS SHOULD EXIST IN THE NATURE AND CONDITION OF ANY BEING, IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY HIS BEING HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS CONDUCT?

We allow it to be requisite to this end that, in relation to the conduct for which he is held responsible, his action should be independent, intelligent, and free; that he should be competent to its performance, be presented with sufficient motives, and placed under an adequate impulse.

1. The first element of responsibility, we have said, is to act *independently*. I am sensible that the term *independently*, which, for want of a better, I have here used, may be taken in a wider latitude than that in which I mean to employ it; let me be permitted, therefore, to limit it to the import I design to convey by it. What I mean is not, of course, that, in order to be responsible, we should act independently of *all* influences, which is evidently impossible; but I have in view one particular influence, to which it is conceivable that a personal agent may be subject—that, namely, of some other being, a personal agent, acting in him or by him. I intend that the actions for which we are held responsible should be our own, and not another's; not such, for example, as those of the ancient demoniacs (I assume, for the value of the illustration, the literal import of the narrative), in and by whom the evil spirits spake and wrought. No one can have held these unhappy persons responsible for what they so said and did; nor could we with any manifest justice be held responsible, if our conduct were referable to a cause of the same class. What we are to

answer for should clearly be our own deed, and not another's; or, in other words, responsible action must be independent action.

2. The second element of responsibility is to act *intelligently;* that is to say, with a knowledge of the facts and considerations under the influence of which we are required to act; or, to speak more strictly, with the means of knowing them, and the capacity of appreciating them. It could not but be unjust to summon men to a particular course of action in necessary ignorance of the motives adapted to lead to it. The means of knowledge, and a capacity of appreciating the things known in relation to a prescribed course, are therefore indispensable to a just responsibility.

3. The third element of responsibility is to act *freely;* that is, from our own feelings, and under no kind of constraint, or coercion. Forced action is evidently no longer our own, nor can we fairly be chargeable with its consequences. If we have been compelled by some other intelligent being, he is the party who should be held accountable; and if by some physical cause, responsibility ceases altogether. We can justly be held responsible only for conduct which we have chosen, or, in other words, for actions freely performed.

4. The fourth element of responsibility is *to possess a competency* to perform the conduct required of us; or, in other words, to be able to do it. What I mean is, that the things required of us should be such as the use of our natural faculties would accomplish. This is an obvious principle of equity. No person could ever think of requiring from another that which the exercise of all his means of action could not effect.

5. The fifth element of responsibility is to act *in view of sufficient motives, or inducements.* He who wishes us to take a particular course will naturally exhibit to us some inducements to its adoption; and, if he means to hold us accountable for our conduct herein, he is bound to present us with sufficient inducements. To be displeased with us because we have not done what he supplied us with no sufficient inducements to do, would be evidently unreasonable. His design to hold us responsible involves an obligation upon his part to make the inducements sufficient.

It may be proper here to explain what I mean by a sufficient motive, or inducement. A *suf*ficient motive is not to be confounded with an *ef*ficient one. It is not one which actually prevails, but one which is so adapted to the end in view that, if it be considered, it will prevail; just as a sufficient weight is not one which actually turns the scale, but one which, if it be put into the scale, will turn it. Motives are designed to have an influence on the feelings, which are the springs of our conduct; but the medium—the proper and the only medium—by which they are to exert this influence, is our consideration of them: hence, if they are sufficient, consideration, by bringing them into bearing, will give them effect. If, being considered, the motives do not operate, this is a proof that they are not sufficient; just as a weight must be pronounced insufficient which, when placed in the balance, does not turn the scale. It is in this sense that we place the employment of sufficient motives among the proper elements of responsibility.

6. The sixth and last element of responsibility is to act *under an adequate impulse.* Our feelings are the impulses of our conduct. If any one wishes to engage us to a specific line of action, he must use means to awaken the feelings which would impel us to it; and if there be a certain class of feelings to which he requires us to yield, intending to reward or punish us accordingly, there clearly ought to be in these feelings somewhat of an extraordinary strength, a character of power and authority, as compared with our other feelings. Without this, how can we be justly praised or blamed for indulging one class of our feelings more than another? An adequate impulse is, then, another element of just responsibility.

Let us now sum up these particulars. I acknowledge—and I think that, in making this acknowledgment, I act with undeniable candour and fairness—that in order to just responsibility, it is necessary we should act independently, intelligently, and freely; that we should be competent to perform what is required of us, should be supplied with sufficient motives, and placed under an adequate impulse. If all or either of these elements were not apparent, I would not say that then we are not responsible, either in fact or in reason; but I confess that I should not then see the justice of our responsibility, and that I would make no attempt to

prove it. I should then put this doctrine among things mysterious; resting its reception on the authority of the inspired volume, confirmed by nature and providence, and leaving its vindication to a future day, the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." But if in our nature and condition there are, and can be shown to be, the elements which I have named, then I conceive the justice of human responsibility will be demonstrated. Nothing more, I imagine, can be demanded to constitute an equitable accountableness, than the particulars which have been specified. If he may not be held responsible whose actions are his own; who may know and can appreciate the considerations under which he is required to act; who acts without constraint; who is able to do what is demanded; who has motives presented to him, which, if considered, will certainly prevail; and who is endowed with an adequate impulse to the choice required of him; if such a being may not be held responsible by one properly entitled to do so, it is hard indeed to say who may. Every claim being thus met, it becomes unjust to deny, rather than to assert, the responsibility arising out of such arrangements. Or, if any thing more be wanting to constitute a just responsibility, let us be informed what it is.

It is now to be considered whether what I have denominated the proper elements of responsibility actually exist in the nature and condition of man. I am not unaware that every one of the particulars has been denied, and some of them not only by unbelievers in Christianity. For my own part, however, I affirm them all, and shall endeavour, in the subsequent chapters of this Treatise, to show the grounds of my conviction.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: OR WHETHER MEN ACT INDEPENDENTLY.

In the preceding chapter we have enumerated six particulars, as hypothetical elements adapted to constitute together

a state of just responsibility. It is our purpose henceforth to show that these elements are not merely hypothetical, but extant in the nature and condition of man. In the present chapter we take up the first of them.

The first element we have assumed as belonging to a state of responsibility, is *to act independently;* and it is now for us to inquire whether men do act independently, or not. I need scarcely here repeat the explanation I have already given, that, in claiming for a being who is to be held responsible a power of independent action, I do not set up a claim to absolute and universal independence. I readily admit that there are many sources of influence of which men cannot be independent. But, at the present moment, I am regarding man as one of several classes of personal agents; and, if he is to be held responsible, I claim for him a certain measure and kind of independence of other beings, so that no one of them shall so act in or by man as to make the action not his own.

Of course, the only Being practically involved in this proposition is the great and glorious One who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein. It has never been supposed that, in a sane condition, any other being but God could so occupy the seeming agent man as to render his apparent actions not really his own; but with respect to him the question has been actually raised, and strongly insisted on.

There have not been wanting both philosophers and divines to tell us that man is not an agent, but a machine, the moving power of which is in his Maker; and that, in truth, God is the doer of all things, and the only real agent in the universe. Undoubtedly, if this position could be made good, it would go far towards proving that God should be held accountable instead of man, and should be reckoned accountable for all things, since he is the doer of all. Such a sentiment, however, is not hastily to be admitted.

It might be thought surprising, that good men should not have revolted from the obvious tendency of this sentiment to dishonour the Being whom they supremely revere. It clearly represents God as the author of sin, and as doing not only what he has himself forbidden and declared that he abhors, but what he has made all rational creatures to condemn and abhor likewise. It moreover converts the solemnities of his

moral government into what, if it were not wicked and cruel, might well be deemed a farce; since it must, in that case, be a system under which men are first made to seem to do what they really do not, and then actually rewarded or punished for what they have only seemingly done. As it is not only with good men, however, that I am now arguing, I shall lay no farther stress upon this consideration. There are persons who rejoice in an opportunity of doing dishonour to Him whom they find it a grief to obey; and I must appeal to other arguments.

The affirmative evidence I adduce on this subject is of two kinds. The first is drawn from our constitution; the second from our consciousness.

I advert first to the constitution of the human mind, as ascertained by a careful observation and analysis of its action.

The mind of man appears to consist of a substance (of course we deem it not a material substance) possessing a permanent sensibility to the objects by which it is surrounded, or a susceptibility of feeling, both varied and powerful, as affected by them. This essential and living sensibility, so variously excited, is the direct and immediate impulse of human actions. It is excited by the perception of objects, when excited it prompts to volition (or choice) and action, and its excitement is subject to a regulating power of thought.* Now, what I say is, that here is a being contrived as for the very purpose of acting of and for himself, and, to such extent as may be permitted, independently of his Creator. The structure of the machinery indicates the nature of the action intended.

I confirm this conclusion by an appeal to our own consciousness, a kind of evidence which is clearly appropriate, since the matter to be ascertained is the manner of our own action, and which ought to be satisfactory, since it is the most direct evidence that exists, not excepting the evidence of the senses. I ask any man, therefore, to ascertain for himself, by the evidence of his own consciousness, whether he acts independently or not. In our various operations is it ourselves who act? Or does an acute observation of what passes within us detect any other agent, whose vehicle and instru-

* This, I am aware, is disputed: it will be vindicated in a subsequent page.

ment we are? One answer, I suppose, will be universally given to these questions. According to all we are conscious of, we are not actuated by another being; we act of and for ourselves. This, however, is not demonstration. It is yet possible that some other being may act in us, although we are not able to detect it; and it will be proper, therefore, to attend to the arguments on the other side.

The sentiment we repel has been supported in two methods; on the one hand by general reasoning, and on the other by Scripture quotation. We must pay some attention to both of these.

1. It has been laid down as an axiom, that creatures cannot, in any degree or in any sense, be independent of their Creator. As he brought them into being, and sustains them in existence, they are but parts of himself. He lives in them, and therefore acts in them. Unless they had an independent existence, they cannot exert independent action. So it is alleged.

Now much of this, of course, we most reverently admit. We acknowledge the glory of the Almighty Creator, who upholds all things by the perpetual employment of the power that made them. We have not the slightest idea that a creature can possess independent existence; but we do not see how it follows from this that God cannot qualify and permit a creature to act, within a certain scope, so far independently of himself that he shall be the originator of the actions he performs. We are willing to admit that he breathes in the wind, smiles in the sun, and utters his voice in the storm: we are willing further to admit that he works in the brute creation; but why must we extend this idea to the actions of men? To assert that God *cannot* qualify a creature to act independently of himself is by no means convincing. This only raises a question of possibility with God. And who is this, we ask, that is competent to say what is or is not possible with him? Or by what means has any one made so singular a discovery? Is this the modesty of an inquirer after truth? Is this the cautious induction of a sound philosophy? Is this, above all, to be taken for argument, and to be admitted for the settlement of controversy? If we were to admit it, where would it end, or whither would it conduct us; since all men may have their own notions of what God can do, every one with as much

right and probability as his fellow, although probably no two in perfect agreement? And why is one man's opinion that God cannot do a thing worth more in argument than another man's opinion that he can?

Besides, our notions of what God can do are all taken from what we can do ourselves. Our own power affords necessarily both the suggestion and the rule of the capabilities we ascribe to others. To make ourselves the judges of what God can do, therefore, is merely to reduce him to the measure of our own feebleness, and practically to deny him the omnipotence which we allow. We cannot listen for a moment to such an inspiration of ignorance and pride. Without pretending to explain how the Creator may have found it practicable to limit his own interference, and to assign to some of his creatures, properly endowed for it, a definite sphere of independent action, we can find no difficulty in believing that this is possible. At all events, we are sure no one can prove that it is not;* and unless this is proved, nothing is proved to the purpose of the argument.

2. If we cannot be concluded on this point by general reasoning, let us now see what may be accomplished against us by Scripture citation.

The passages quoted in support of the proposition that God is the doer of all things are these. "I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Isa. xlv. 7. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos iii. 6. "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," several times repeated, Exod. vii. 13, *et seq.* "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Isa. vi. 10. "Therefore hath he mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. ix. 18. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded; according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day." Rom. xi. 7, 8.

Such are the principal, I believe I may say all the passages

* The argument derived from the general doctrine of causation, or the supposed proof that God is the author of all actions because he is the first cause of the universe, is noticed in a subsequent chapter.

of Sacred Writ to be adduced in support of the opinion that God does all things, and is the real author of even the blindness and obduracy of men. My first observation concerning them is that they constitute a narrow foundation for such a superstructure, and a slender warrant for so sweeping and fearful an assertion. It might have been thought that a doctrine of so much importance should have rested on a somewhat more extended basis; and that the apparent meaning of those few and insulated passages should have been deemed justly liable to modification by other and unquestionable testimonies of the Divine Word. But we will take them as they stand, and inquire into the true meaning of them.

The first passages quoted are Isa. xlv. 7, and Amos iii. 6. "I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" It is sufficient to observe that the evil here intended is not sin, but suffering; not crime, but calamity. The context in both cases plainly shows that the prophets are respectively referring to God's providential dispensation of temporal judgments.

From the other passages, which all relate to the one point of God's being the author of men's blindness and obduracy, one must be entirely separated; we mean Rom. ix. 18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he *hardeneth*." The Greek term σκληρύνω, which is here rendered *to harden*, deserves serious consideration. No doubt it has this meaning; but that it has not always this meaning is evident from several instances occurring in the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament. Thus in Job's account of the ostrich (chap. xxxix. 14–16) it is said, "Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. Ἀποσκληρύνει τὰ τέκνα ἑαυτῆς, she *treateth severely* her young ones,* as though they were not hers." In a like import the word occurs in 2 Chron. x. 4. "Thy father *made* our yoke *grievous*, ἐσκλήρυνε τὸν ζυγὸν ἡμῶν." One meaning of σκληρύνω, therefore, is *to treat severely;* and we are at full

* In the English Bible unhappily rendered, "she *hardened herself against* her young ones."

liberty to make experiment of its suitableness to the passage under consideration. Let us now read it again. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he *treateth severely*." I ask any reader, without being a critic, to say whether this is not a far more suitable rendering than the other, whether it is not strongly indicated by the parallelism of the passage and the antithetic character of the first clause, and whether it does not perfectly harmonize with the context. I think every considerate person will adopt it without hesitation; and will agree with me in concluding that the passage has no relation to the subject on which it is adduced, namely, the hardening of the heart. To show this is all we have to do with it at present.

The declaration of the Most High, so often and so forcibly repeated, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall not let you go," has no doubt a great appearance of precision, and has been a source of perplexity to many. The observations I have to make concerning it are these. I am not disposed to allow that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (as some have suggested) judicially, or in a way of punishment for antecedent obduracy; such a notion does not appear to me consistent with scriptural truth, and it is nowhere indicated in the history. I conceive the phrase altogether insufficient to prove that God really hardened Pharaoh's heart at all; the apparent force of it being much diminished by the circumstance that the historian employs on other occasions different language in relation to the same fact. If he tells us several times that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, he tells us several times also that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, see Exod. viii. 15, 32, &c.; and if the former phrase be taken as proving the one opinion, the latter may with equal justice be alleged to prove the other. No doubt the proper mode is to interpret the two phrases harmoniously, so that the one shall not be made to contradict the other. This evidently cannot be done by understanding both of them literally. We must see which of them requires this. If we say that the Lord really hardened Pharaoh's heart, there is no sense in which we can understand the declaration that he hardened his own heart; but if we interpret it literally that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, we shall be able to find a consistent meaning for the assertion that it was hardened by the Lord. For it is according to the

general style and mode of Hebrew composition to express after this manner the certainty of existing or future facts, together with God's foreknowledge of them and control over them. So when the Lord says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," I conceive it not to be intended that he would, or did, exercise any influence aggravating or confirming his obstinacy; but that the meaning is no more than what is elsewhere conveyed in the terms, "*I am sure* he will not let you go." The declaration, "For this purpose have I raised thee up that I might show forth my power in thee," clearly does not require to be understood of God's producing Pharaoh's wickedness, but is fairly explicable of his placing this impetuous man in such circumstances as should render his history an eminent illustration of the divine government.

A key may be found, also, to the language of the prophets. They were frequently in vision told to do what their real object was only to announce or to foretell. Thus in Ezekiel, ch. xxi. 19, 21, it is written, "Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways that the sword of the king of Babylon may come; both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. Appoint a way that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination." In this mode was the prophet simply to foretell that Nebuchadnezzar would make war against both the Ammonites and the Jews, and would use divination to determine the order of his attack. Of the same style the words from Isaiah are an obvious example. When the Lord said to him in vision, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," the design evidently was not to direct him to produce such effects upon the people, but to declare that they did exist, and were foreseen. That nothing is here intended contrary to the voluntary nature of their stupidity and inattention is manifest from the manner in which this passage is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament. See Matt. xiii. 13, 15; Mark iv. 11, 12; Luke viii. 10; Acts xxviii. 25, 27.

The passage from Rom. xi. 7, 8, is to be explained in a similar manner. The Israelites who rejected the Messiah "were blinded," no doubt, by their own pride and preju-

dices; and when it is said that "God gave them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear," it is but a usual mode of indicating that he was not at all taken by surprise by their stubbornness, or unprepared to accomplish his purposes notwithstanding the manifestation of it.

By these considerations I trust it is satisfactorily shown that the Scriptures afford neither foundation nor pretext for the sentiment that God does all things, and that he has not qualified and permitted man to occupy a definite province of action as his own.

If the arguments adduced against the proposition we advocate have been shown to be inconclusive, we may fall back with satisfaction upon the evidence by which it is sustained. Theoretically appropriate as an element of responsibility, practically apparent in the structure of the human mind, and manifest in the experience of all, we may deem it true that God has endowed his creature man with faculties adapted to render him, within certain limits, a source of primary and not of secondary action. He has fitted us to originate our own conduct, and has not made us to be mere instruments for himself. Thus constituted, our Maker, we conceive, has allotted to us a certain scope of independence, a space within which we are to act of and for ourselves; in relation to this part of our conduct, and this alone, does he assume the character of our Governor, and declare his intention of rewarding us according to our works.

I hope there is nothing in these views which need be unsatisfactory to a devout mind, or which is really inconsistent with that humble trust and leaning upon God, that voluntary dependence upon his help and favour, so truly blessed in itself and characteristic of genuine piety. I hope none will so entirely misunderstand me as to suppose that I advocate a spirit of independence, or, in other words, of self-confidence.

If any one tells me that the sentiment I have advocated tends to atheism, I reply that he speaks on the supposition of my pleading for a natural and necessary independence of the creature on the Creator, which I do not. The kind of independence I plead for is by God's grant and permission to his creature, for the purpose of moral government; which, I think, cannot justly be said to be atheistic.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: OR WHETHER MEN ACT INTELLIGENTLY.

As it is requisite to our just responsibility in the first place that we should act independently, so it is requisite in the second that we should act *intelligently;* that is, knowing (or with the means of knowing) and appreciating the motives to which we are called upon to yield. It is our business now to ascertain whether men have the means of such knowledge and appreciation.

It will here promptly occur, perhaps, to the reader, that an enlarged knowledge of religious truths is enjoyed by comparatively few, and that by far the greater portion of mankind are deplorably ignorant of them. Of argument upon this matter, however, there is happily no need, since involuntary ignorance, of which alone I presume we are now speaking, is admitted on all hands to be a proper and necessary limit of responsibility. Such is the clear declaration of Holy Scripture itself, Rom. ii. 12: "For as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." By the term *law*, as here used, we are plainly to understand a revelation of the will of God, comprehending of course both precepts and sanctions; and what the apostle affirms is, that revelation shall not be used as the rule of retribution towards those to whom it has not been given as a rule of life. If any have sinned who did not possess revelation, they shall not be liable to its sanctions; those only who have sinned amidst its light shall fall under its penalties. In relation to this point, therefore, responsibility is not a fixed but a variable element, maintaining a proportion always to our means of knowledge. If there be any whose means of knowledge are few, their responsibility is small; and if there be any whose means of knowledge are none, none is their responsibility also.

All this, however, is remote from the question properly before us, and is but clearing our way to the consideration of it. There is a portion of mankind to whom the truths of

religion are revealed, and who have the means of becoming acquainted with them; and the inquiry to which we have to address ourselves is whether men are able to understand what is so made known to them, or whether there exists any cause obstructing this result: in a word, whether men can understand the law of God and the gospel of Christ.

Of course I take the affirmative of this question. And I rest the proof of it on the plainness of revealed truth. What, for example, can be more plain than such declarations as these? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. As though God did beseech by us, we pray men in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." These are a sample, a fair one and but a sample, of scriptural truths; and surely these can be understood, even by a child. The truths under which God thus requires us to act are neither the mysteries of systematic theology, the subtile speculations of metaphysical philosophy, nor the recondite facts of natural science, but truths so plain that he who runs may read. The wayfaring man, though uninstructed in every thing besides, need not err therein.

On this ground, however, we are confronted both by the infidel and the divine, and we must meet both.

1. The infidel taunts us with the mysteries of revelation, and protests that neither can he understand the Bible, nor any body else.

Now I can admit without any embarrassment that there are mysteries in the Scriptures; but I have to say, that nothing is proved to the purpose of the objector unless it is proved that the Bible is all mystery, and that nothing in it can be understood. Some parts may be obscure, but if other parts be plain, then to this extent it is available to its professed design. I am very willing that what cannot be understood should be passed by, provided what can be understood be pondered and obeyed.

I have also to say further, that a proposition is not to be

set down as unintelligible because it contains or asserts what is mysterious. When I say that the grass grows I assert a mystery, for no one can tell how it grows; but the proposition can be understood, and is understood by every body. When I assert that God was manifest in the flesh—the great mystery of godliness—this proposition is quite as intelligible as the former, and is no less universally understood.

It certainly is with remarkable heedlessness that the charge I am now noticing is adduced. The truths of religion are in point of fact understood, even by the very infidel who laughs at them as unintelligible; for, if he does not understand them, why does he laugh at them? Does he in any other case deride what he does not understand? Would he laugh at a sentence in an unknown language, or at English words so arranged as to make no meaning? Undoubtedly not. Then why does he scoff at scriptural declarations, but because he does understand them, and by his understanding of them arrives at the conclusion that they are worthy of ridicule? The measure of understanding of the Scriptures which suffices for him to reject the Gospel certainly might suffice for embracing it. Propositions not understood can no more be rejected than received, no more ridiculed than revered.

In reality, in the assertion that the Gospel cannot be understood because it contains mysteries there is a confusion of terms, and a consequent illusion of the understanding. There is in all cases a broad and palpable distinction between comprehending a subject treated of, and understanding the propositions laid down respecting it. So when we say, Life is a property of animals, or, There is an identity in the human body at different periods of life, we speak of subjects —namely, life and corporeal identity—which are as truly mysterious as the divinity of Christ or the doctrine of the trinity; but no one imagines for a moment that the propositions themselves are unintelligible. It results altogether from overlooking this distinction, and from confounding the comprehensibleness of a subject with the intelligibleness of a proposition,—which, however, are never confounded but in religion—that it comes to be deemed hard to be understood when the Scriptures teach us that in the godhead there is a trinity, or that Christ is God.

2. Quitting the infidel, we will now attend to the divine:

for—with deep regret be it acknowledged—Christian ministers have upheld the notion that men cannot understand the Gospel. On this surprising and painful subject we humbly ask, Why not?

In reply to this question we are told, in the first place, that the Scriptures declare men to be blind to divine truth; and we acknowledge it. In ancient prophecy (Isa. xlii. 7) the Messiah was fore-announced as about "to open the blind eyes;" and, in proclaiming the object of his own mission (Luke iv. 18), the Saviour said he had come "to preach the recovering of sight to the blind." Consistent with this language is that used by the same authority to the apostle of the Gentiles, whose commission to the nations was "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light," Acts xxvi. 18. All this we are not ignorant of, nor are we concerned either to deny or to evade it. What we have to reply is, that, if on the one hand the Scriptures declare that men are blind, they affirm on the other that men both can and do see. Thus respecting the Jews our Lord states expressly (John xv. 24,) "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." And it is upon the fact that they understood, and were able to appreciate, the nature and bearing of the works he had done among them, that he establishes the criminality of their rejection of him: "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin: if I had not done among them the works which none other man did they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." John xv. 22, 24. In like manner our Lord repudiates the notion that the Pharisees were blind, when they asked him whether he intended to intimate that they were so. "Are we blind also?" said they. To which Christ replied by the strongest possible negative: "If ye were blind ye should have no sin." John ix. 40, 41.

I have not adduced these cases to make it appear that the Scripture contradicts itself, but only to show the necessity of a considerate interpretation of it. Unquestionably these declarations are all of them consistent with each other and with truth, and in harmony with this view of them must they be understood. It appears by them that there is one sense in which men are blind to religious truth, and another in which they are not blind to it. It is our business correctly to ascertain these different meanings of the same term,

and there is a passage which will enable us easily to do so, by presenting them both to us in immediate connexion and contrast. It is the important passage already in part quoted from Isa. vi. 9, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." The prophet is here directed to affirm that the people *do see and hear*, (they are therefore neither blind nor deaf) but that they *do not perceive nor understand;* that is, they do not attend to what they see and hear so as to be influenced by it. The blindness charged upon men, therefore, is not a defective capacity to know, but a habit of inattention to what may be known; not any thing amiss in the eye, but a closing of it against the light, or an aversion of it from the object which should be contemplated. In a word, the blindness of men to religious truth is precisely the blindness of those who will not see.

It is clear, then, that the scriptural affirmation of the blindness of men to religious truth, instead of constituting a denial of their capacity to know it, in the strongest manner implies the existence of such a capacity.

We are next detained by an asserted peculiarity of Gospel truth, as compared with all other truth; we are assured that it is spiritual truth, and cannot be discerned but by a spiritual eye. In support of this representation we are presented with a passage from 1 Cor. ii. 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Before noticing this interesting and important quotation, I must make an observation respecting one of the terms employed. We often practise illusions upon ourselves by using words without a meaning. I should like any person who permits himself to use the phrases *spiritual truth* and *spiritual perception*, to tell me whether he ever did, or can at this moment, attach an idea to them. What is the property of *spirituality* as connected with truth? Or what is the peculiarity denoted in any truth by calling it *spiritual?* Or what is *spiritual perception?* Is it any thing different from ordinary perception? And if so, in what respect? By spiritual truth I can understand only truth relating to religion. By spiritual perception I suppose may be intended the perception of religious truth with a corresponding feel-

ing. So understood, however, the phrases are nothing to the purpose in hand. Those who intend them to express a reason for believing that men in general cannot understand the Gospel must mean, or seem to mean, something else by them; but what it may be I confess myself unable to comprehend, nor do I think they can explain it themselves.

To come, then, to the Scripture cited. The general observation I make upon it is that, upon examination, it will be found not to refer to the knowledge of the Gospel at all, but to the reception or approbation of it. To be satisfied of this let us quote a preceding verse closely connected with it, v. 12: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God." The word here rendered *know* primarily means *to see;* but it is used on some occasions to denote an actual participation, either of good or evil. In the latter sense it is used in Luke ii. 26, where it is said that Simeon "should not *see death* before he had seen the Lord's Christ;" in Heb. xi. 5, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not *see death;*" and in Acts xiii. 36, 37, "David . . . *saw corruption;* but he whom God raised again *saw no corruption.*" In the sense of participating good, the word is used 1 Pet. iii. 10, "He that will love life, *and see good days:*" and John iii. 3, "Except a man be born again he cannot *see the kingdom of God.*" These examples abundantly show what may be, and from the connection it is apparent what must be, the meaning of the word in the passage before us. "We," says Paul, (speaking of Christians, no doubt) "have received not the spirit [or temper] of the world, but the spirit [or temper] which is of God, that we may know [that is, may participate, or experimentally enjoy] the things which are freely given to us of God." "But the natural man," he continues, (describing now the contrast between the righteous and the wicked) "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness [things worthless and disagreeable] to him: neither can he know [relish] them, because they are spiritually [by a religious temper] discerned [or enjoyed]." The sentiment here conveyed is that the Gospel cannot be delighted in unless the mind be "spiritual," that is to say, in a state of feeling harmonizing with the Gospel; a very just and important sentiment indeed, but altogether remote from the

question under discussion. We are inquiring, not whether a wicked man can *relish* the Gospel, but whether he can *understand* it; and it is plain that nothing contrary to this is here said by the apostle.

But I will not stop here. I will go further, and maintain that the language of the apostle in this very place confirms the sentiment I uphold. For to the natural man, he tells us, the things of the spirit of God—that is, the truths of the Gospel—are foolishness, he treats them as things worthless and disagreeable; but how could he do this if he did not understand them? In this case they would be things simply unintelligible, and could no more be despised on the one hand than they could be delighted in on the other. In truth, the rejection of the Gospel as necessarily implies the previous understanding of it as its reception; and, as all who hear the Gospel and do not receive it are charged with rejecting it, the doctrine of Scripture evidently is, that the Gospel both can be and is understood by all to whom it is sent.

A passage of a different class has also been cited in reference to the point before us. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath *given us an understanding* to know him that is true, &c." 1 John v. 20. It appears that this passage does relate to knowledge, and the term "understanding" to the faculty of knowledge; but the connexion evinces that it does not refer to the general experience of Christians, but to the special operation of God upon the writer and other inspired men, enabling them to speak with certainty upon matters not otherwise to be ascertained. What presumption must there not have been, if God had not given the apostle in a very peculiar sense "an understanding to know" it, in making so solemn and sweeping a declaration as that which immediately precedes the words quoted? "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness." And when he goes on to add, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ," it is plainly but an emphatic mode of asserting truths which had been vehemently controverted, together with his own inspired qualification to affirm them positively, notwithstanding all contradiction.

Having thus noticed the several grounds on which it has

been alleged that men cannot understand the Gospel, I return to the affirmation that they can. I may very safely admit that a great many do not understand it, and that the prevalence of evil passions renders men very averse to the contemplation of it; but with all this I may consistently maintain, that every man of sound mind is capable of understanding the Scripture in its general truths—or, in other words, the precepts and motives addressed to him by his Maker for the regulation of his conduct. In relation to these, therefore, as far as the means of knowledge are imparted to him, he acts intelligently, and is on this ground justly responsible for his conduct. He is in the light, and has an eye to make use of it; it is surely no unrighteous requisition that he should walk in the light.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: OR WHETHER MEN ACT FREELY.

Besides being independent and intelligent, it is required to responsibility, in the third place, that action should be *free;* that is to say, without constraint. It will now be our business to inquire whether this property, like the two former, pertains to the actions of men.

On this, as on a former occasion, I appeal to the consciousness of mankind. Of some methods of applying force to our action the effect is immediately perceptible by us; and it is a matter of high probability that, whatever the kind of force might be, or the mode of its application, we should always be sensible of it. Free action and forced action are so distinct from each other, both in their essential properties and in the sensations accompanying them, that it is hard to conceive how either should fail to be discerned, or how the one should be mistaken for the other. It may be laid down, I think, as an axiom, that when we act freely we know it, and that we know also when we act under constraint; or, if any think that it may not, and deem rather that some coercive

power may be exercised over us of which there shall be no indication, yet so far as sources of perceptible constraint are concerned, the evidence of our own consciousness must be appropriate and decisive.

I appeal, then, to the consciousness of my reader, and of all men. Are we in our general agency conscious of coercion? Of various influences we are conscious, prompting, inducing, exciting us to act, or to refrain from acting: but which of these has the experimental character of compulsion? When we are excited to compassion, or prompted to restrain anger, are our feelings the same as if we were pushed violently into a river, or bound with fetters? Is there not in all cases of the former class a consciousness that the impulse, however strong, might have been resisted; or, which is the same thing, that in yielding to it we acted freely?

To strengthen the testimony of our consciousness upon this point, I call up some of those ultimate facts of our constitution from which its nature may with so much safety be inferred. I advert especially to two of them.

The first is the universal operation of motives, or inducements to action. There is no scope for the operation of motives but in a state of freedom. For you to persuade a man shut up in prison, or confined by sickness to his bed, to pay you a visit, or for a person so situated to consider whether he would do so, could be nothing less than absurd. Now this absurdity arises out of the general principle, and is one exemplification of it, that the presentation and entertainment of motives is always absurd, unless there be freedom of action. From this fact in our nature we may argue to its constitution. Were men not made free to act, it would be an absurdity that they should have been made susceptible of inducements to act: this would have been constituting their nature violently out of harmony with their condition, which is a thing not to be supposed. The fact, then, that men are made susceptible of motives, and universally act under them without question, may be adduced as a proof that their action is free.

The second fact I refer to, is the existence and permanence of moral distinctions among men. I am not concerned to say that the moral sentiments of men have been either always alike or always correct; it is enough for my purpose that moral distinctions universally exist, and that men every-

where approve or condemn, attach praise or blame. If the habit of thus distinguishing between actions is founded in justice as well as in nature, the actions of men must be free; since forced action cannot be conceived to deserve either censure or commendation. Here again therefore we argue, as before, either that men's actions are free, or that their Maker has endowed them with a tendency to form judgments universally erroneous. Either they live in a world of falsehoods, or they are free agents. It is far easier to believe the latter than the former.

To enter more fully into this subject, however, let us inquire from what sources constraint of human actions may be conceived, or is alleged, to arise.

1. One source of alleged constraint of human actions has been found in the philosophical *doctrine of causation*. With the single exception of the divine essence, it is argued, nothing exists absolutely, or of itself: every thing else is the effect of some cause by which it has been produced, and with which it corresponds. The universe, therefore, is nothing but a succession of causes and effects; and, since one cause cannot produce two or dissimilar effects, all effects, and therefore all actions, are necessarily what they are, and cannot be otherwise.

I have not stated this argument so fully because there is any thing new in it, for it is in truth nothing more than the ancient fatalism, but because I wish it to be clearly before the eyes of the reader while I make a few remarks upon it.

I first of all warn him, then, not to be frightened at the apparent conclusiveness of this reasoning. It is no new thing in metaphysical philosophy for reasoning to be at once apparently conclusive and demonstrably false; that is to say, metaphysical reasoners have sometimes come to a palpably false conclusion, without any one being able to detect a flaw in the reasoning by which they have arrived at it. A signal instance of this may be cited in a celebrated prelate, Bishop Berkeley, who is admitted to have proved beyond the power of *argumentative* refutation the non-existence of the material universe; that there is no such thing as sun or stars, as earth or sea, as the existence of other men or even our own. The fact is, that in subjects of this class, there are more modes of fallacious argument than the human understanding has been

able to detect; and that proof may sometimes be given of the falsity of a conclusion, and therefore of the fallacy of an argument, when we are not able to show wherein the fallacy consists.

An evident indication that there must be a fallacy somewhere in the argument now before us may be found in trying the application of it to the subject in hand. The gist of it is that *actions cannot be free because they are caused.* Just as though it were necessary to the freedom of an action, not that it should have a voluntary cause, but that it should have no cause at all!

Or let us treat the argument before us in a different manner. We may affirm at once that it cannot be sound, because, if admitted, it proves too much; it goes to establish a principle which is rejected by the universal convictions of mankind, including the very propounders and demonstrators of it themselves. All things are necessary, we are told; they must be as they are, and cannot be otherwise. If this is a truth it must be fit to be acted on; and all I say is, let men begin to act upon it. Act upon it? Why it takes away every inducement to act at all. Motives, as felt by us, are all of them resolvable into a wish to accomplish some desirable end; or, in other words, to effect a change, either in the present state of things, or in the apprehended future. If we come to believe that our exertions can effect no change, since nothing can be otherwise than it is, inducement to action is utterly extinguished. But to be susceptible of inducement to action, and to act under it, are essential characteristics of human nature; and a sentiment which goes to annihilate the influence of motives cannot be a truth.

Let this matter be looked at in practice. We adopt modes of industry to provide for our necessities or to acquire property, we take food for nourishment or medicine for health, we use precaution to prevent fire or means to extinguish it, because we believe that our using these means will make the results different from what they would be if we did not use them. If we renounce this belief, and adopt the notion that, all things being necessary, results cannot be altered, we have no longer a motive to do any of these things; and if we act upon this belief we shall do none of them. I cannot alter my condition; therefore I shall neither

work, nor eat, nor take medicine, nor bar my door, nor put out a fire. The philosophers who pretend to believe such a doctrine no more act upon it than the vulgar who do not. The common sense of both pronounces it to be false.

Further, as this sentiment destroys all motives to action, so it destroys all distinctions between actions performed. All things are necessary, and cannot be otherwise than they are; actions are therefore necessary, and such a thing as free or voluntary action there is not. Very well. Then there can be no such thing as right or wrong, as vice or virtue; for these can clearly be predicated of none but voluntary action. If there be no voluntary action, then all action must be involuntary; and difference in character between one action and another there cannot be, nor any reason for praise in one case or blame in another. If you see two men, one of whom adheres to truth at the hazard of his life, and the other tells a lie to save it; if you see one man rapacious and monopolizing, and another dispersing and benevolent; if you see a murderer reeking with the blood of his victim, and a compassionate person striving to bind up the wounds of the dying; you are to look on them all with the same emotion, or rather with the same indifference: and if, perchance, you should become conscious of admiration towards the one or abhorrence towards the other, you must rebuke yourself for your infatuation, and quench your indignant or generous emotions, if you can, by the subduing recollection that voluntary action is impossible. You should understand that the action of a man in murdering his fellow differs nothing in quality from that of a tiger in devouring him, or from that of the wind and sea in wrecking him; and that the action of a bountiful man in blessing the poor is of precisely the same kind as that of the sun and the rain in eliciting the fruitfulness of the earth. A sentiment leading to such conclusions cannot be true. Even those who profess it do not believe it; since they do not venture to affirm the indifference and equality of human actions, but avow the maintenance of moral distinctions.

It must be evident from these remarks, that the proposition that all things are necessarily as they are, and cannot be otherwise, whatever it may contain of truth, does not contain the whole truth. It involves a fallacy. Whether this fallacy can be satisfactorily exposed is another question. I

am not about to attempt it here; and this for several reasons. In the first place, My design does not require it. The sentiment is brought forward in this argument as against the position I maintain; but it can have no force if it be not true, and it is enough for my purpose, therefore, if I prove that it cannot be true. It would be foolish of me to attempt more than my argument requires. Secondly, If the fallacy of the proposition could be demonstrated at all, it must be by means of a subtile and lengthened disquisition not at all suited to this place. And, thirdly, The proposition in question conducts us to a point upon which, to our understandings, mystery must always rest. God is an uncaused being and we are not such, but voluntary action is ascribed to us both: in God, as an uncaused being, voluntary action is no mystery; but it is a mystery in us, whose being and agency are both produced and determined by causes. That our agency is voluntary notwithstanding the action of causes, we are sure is a fact; but to make apparent the consistency of a system of causation with a system of voluntary action is not therefore easy. In truth, this has been always the great problem of philosophy, and it is perhaps incapable of solution. Its being so, however, as it can create no practical perplexity, so it ought to occasion no surprise. It is evidently but a natural, and should not have been an unexpected result of the limited range of human faculties. It is not that the universe in this respect is out of joint, but that we are not at present in a position to perceive and appreciate the harmony of its parts. It is, in a word, that, being creatures, we cannot comprehend all that is intelligible to the Creator. It is a small exercise of modesty to be acquiescent under such an imperfection of our knowledge.

2. Another alleged source of constraint on human actions is the *determining power of motives.* It has been asserted that we cannot act freely unless motives be absent from the mind.

In noticing this allegation, let us first understand what is here meant by a motive. One of two ideas may be attached to this term. A motive may be, either a consideration adapted to excite us to action, or a state of feeling actually impelling us to action. When it is said that we have sufficient motives to act in a given manner, the motives spoken of are the considerations presented to us; when it is said

that we have acted under certain motives, we speak of the feelings which have been excited in the mind. The latter is, of course, the meaning in which we are to use the term now; and the allegation we have to examine is, that the influence of motives, regarded as existing in the mind, is of the nature of coercion.

The ground of this allegation, of course, is the fact (which I admit) that motives determine our actions; and this, it is said, is coercion.

The conclusion thus arrived at, it must be confessed, is sufficiently surprising. It might have been thought that adequate provision had been made for an agent to act voluntarily, when he was made with two properties—first, to act from his feelings; and, secondly, to have the control of his feelings. But some philosophers will not allow this. They insist that the determining power of motives is destructive of voluntary action. I ask them, then, whether they conceive motives to be substantial entities in the mind, different and distinct from the mind itself. It seems to be only by such a view of the case that their conclusion can be arrived at. If motives be separate existences in the mind, I can understand how they may constitute a source of coercion: but—which is the fact—if motives be not such separate existences, but only the mind itself in a state of given excitement, then I see not how the possibility of such a result can be alleged. The motives being a mere state of the agent, or, which is the same thing, the agent himself in a given state, if the motives coerce him, he must coerce himself, which is absurd. Or, to be more easily understood, let us put a case in simpler terms. Say that I have done an act of charity, and that I did it under the influence of compassion; the question is, did compassion, which was my motive, coerce my charity? Now, if the compassion under which I acted as a motive had been a thing separately existing in my mind, then it might be said to have coerced me, since, no doubt, it determined my action; but if the said compassion had no such separate existence in my mind, but was only my mind itself in a state of compassionate excitement, or, which is the same thing, was only I myself in such a state of excitement, then, whatever determining power may have been exercised by it, there can have been no coercion, since it is I myself who have exercised it. And this is the very nature of free

or voluntary action, that it is the result of influences which the agent himself exercises. The assertion, therefore, that the influence of motives is coercive, seems to rest entirely upon the fallacy of supposing that they are separate existences in the mind, which, upon consideration, I suppose no one will affirm them to be.

As other alleged sources of constraint on human actions remain to be considered at some length, we shall resume the subject in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE THIRD ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY CONTINUED.

In the last chapter we were employed on considerations relating to the freedom of human agency, (which I have exhibited as the third element of responsibility) and the constraint under which some assert it to be exercised. The alleged sources of constraint on human actions to which we have hitherto adverted are of a metaphysical character. We now turn to those which are to be found in the nature and circumstances of the agent himself, or in the condition, whether internal or external, of mankind.

3. I notice in the first place what we have just termed the internal condition of men; under which I include all impulses to action existing or arising within ourselves—whether proceeding from the appetites or the propensities, the body or the mind. I suppose that these are comprehended in the word *organization* as now frequently used on the subject before us, and together make up the meaning of it. The word *temperament* has long been employed in a similar sense.

Now it is plain that the impulses thus arising minister many, and often very strong excitements to action. This it is neither necessary nor possible to call in question; the point raised in relation to them is whether they exert an absolute and irresistible power. It has been conceived in some quarters that we lie altogether at the mercy of our temperament, or organization, and cannot do otherwise than fulfil its bidding.

I cannot concur in this opinion. It appears rather that our constitutional impulses constitute nothing more than inducements to action; and the presentation of inducements is not coercion but persuasion, and always an occasion of acquiescence or resistance. For it is to be observed that our constitutional impulses do not in fact either universally or uniformly prevail. Take first some of the evil ones for examples. Some men are by temperament irascible, but not all irascible men are soon angry; some of them acquire eminent meekness. Some men are by temperament proud; but some of this class become signally humble. Or take the more striking illustrations afforded by the amiable impulses. Some persons are by temperament sympathetic, but not all such persons show much compassion; on the contrary, we see too often the union of a sympathetic temperament with practical unkindness. Some persons are by temperament gentle, but of these not a few become petulant and wayward. In the face of such facts as these, with which every observant person must be familiar, how can it be maintained that the influence of temperament is irresistible? Why, it is in fact resisted. If we should be told that its influence is not exclusive but partial, and blended with that of other causes by which it is modified, that is just what we assert, and, whatever causes may be intended, it is giving up the whole point in debate.

4. We proceed, then, to notice a further source of alleged constraint on human actions in the external condition, or the circumstances of the agent.* These make us what we are, say some; and we cannot resist them.

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* With much surprise I have recently heard the circumstances of an agent defined as comprehending "every thing which has any relation whatever to his actions." I do not notice this singular definition for the purpose of criticising it, (although it is obviously open to severe remark) but on account of the different attitude into which it throws the argument of the text. Assuredly I am not going to maintain that our actions are not determined by "any thing which has any relation whatever to them;" since that would be to represent them as determined by nothing at all, or as effects without a cause. By classing "every thing which has any relation whatever to an action" under the name of circumstances, the proposition that our circumstances determine our actions becomes undeniable indeed, but it becomes also utterly insignificant. No one ever said or thought otherwise; and if this be the position which has been contended for so vehemently, and vaunted so loudly, the affair is altogether farcical and ridiculous.

It has been justly remarked that error can never be made palatable to the mind of man but by a certain admixture of truth; and I know not that there ever was a more striking illustration of this remark than the case before us. Here is not only some truth, but a great and palpable truth, mixed up with what we cannot but deem a material error, and constituting its passport to the confidence of the thoughtless. We are powerfully affected by circumstances. Undoubtedly; this is one of the most obvious and notorious of all obvious and notorious facts. That we should be so is both inevitable with our sensibilities, and intended by our Maker. It is a fact which constitutes a material part of the apparatus of his moral government.

But it is further alleged that our circumstances irresistibly influence us; they make us what we are, and we are but the victims of them. We pause at this doctrine, and show our reasons against the admission of it.

1. We say, in the first place, that it cannot be necessarily thus, because our mental constitution contains an obvious provision against this result. I refer to the power we possess over our thoughts. Whatever might be the case if we had not such a power, the possession of this faculty makes a material difference.

Lest it should be disputed, however, whether we have power over our thoughts or not, let me be permitted to cite a few evidences and illustrations of it. And first of all, are we not conscious of exercising such a power incessantly in our ordinary affairs? Of course, I shall not now quote instances in which our thoughts are turned from one object to another *by the force of circumstances*, as such illustrations would be obviously inappropriate; but I ask whether the current of our thoughts is not frequently changed, not only without the influence of circumstances, but contrary to it. Do persons accustomed to reflection and study never select a topic of thought, but as suggested by something in their external condition? Whence do thoughts enforcing meekness arise in the minds of a man experiencing provocations to anger? Or why does a bereaved parent strive to turn off his otherwise rivetted attention from his all-absorbing loss? Surely not from the influence of circumstances, which it is very conceivable may all tend in a contrary direction.

If it be alleged that these efforts and changes of thought,

which as facts cannot be denied, do not originate with ourselves, but in some other cause or causes of which they are the natural effects, and that they therefore fail to prove what is contended for, I require to be shown the causes out of ourselves to which these effects can in all cases be referred. I am convinced that this cannot be done, and that the assertion is both an unproved and unprovable assumption. One obvious source of impulses to voluntary thought is to be found in the temperament, or organization (as it is called) of the agent; and I see not why the mind itself, in its essential sensibilities, may not be the spring of others—such as a sense of duty, of advantage, or of wisdom. And if the impulses under which we change the current of our thoughts originate with ourselves, then clearly it is ourselves who effect the change.

To have the power of voluntary thought has been imagined by some persons to be the same thing as having power to create ideas. But what then are ideas? This singular conception proceeds on the supposition of their being substantive things existing in the mind, which they certainly are not. Thought is nothing else than a state of the mind, or the mind itself in a given state. Our ideas are, properly speaking, our perceptions, and to say that the mind has perceptions of objects, is but to say that the mind is perceiving them. There are, therefore, no such things as ideas to be created; and the power of voluntary thought cannot be the same as the power of creating them. It is simply the power of throwing our minds into the state which we call thinking, under the influence of our own feelings.

I am not required to say that our power over our thoughts is so perfect that we can in a moment turn them altogether away from deeply interesting topics, as from the recent loss of a child, for example. It is enough for my purpose if the thoughts can be diverted from such a topic in part, and by degrees; and every body knows that by degrees, and by repeated efforts, the mind, while sane, may be diverted from even the most engrossing subjects.

That we have at least some measure of power over our thoughts I conceive to be beyond question;* and whatever

* There is another state of the mind in which it exercises command over its thoughts: it *chooses* what particular state it will be in. It either

the measure of that power may be, it will answer the purpose of the present argument. To the extent of its measure it affords us a shelter from our external condition, and modifies its influence. Our actions are influenced by our circumstances only as our feelings are influenced by them, and our feelings are influenced by our circumstances only as our thoughts are engaged by them: if, therefore, we have power over our thoughts, and, under any other impulse, can turn them to objects different from those which our circumstances present to us, we can so far withdraw ourselves practically from our external condition, and live as in a different scene. It matters not to the argument what this other impulse may be; if in any way the diversion of thought may be produced, as we have shown it may, the alleged omnipotence of circumstances vanishes like a shadow. The heart of man may be like a depository of combustibles surrounded by sparks, and it may be admitted that, if it were unguarded and altogether open to their approach, it might at any time be ignited by them; but we affirm it to be watched by a sufficient sentinel,

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attends to some external object, or it disregards all external objects; though, perhaps, they may be making strong impression upon the senses, while it attends to its own operations. It commands one thought to stay, or calls it back after it has passed by; it brings several ideas together, and compares them; or it separates ideas that come into the mind closely joined together. The mind in this state is not like the man who stares idly at a passing crowd; but like the general of an army, who not only *perceives* the objects before him, but who directs at his pleasure all the movements that take place.

The thoughts of animals seem (so far as we are able to judge) to be entirely caused, or influenced, either by the objects which they perceive through the senses, or by their internal sensations, such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, &c. They do indeed act according to thought, or knowledge; but their thoughts are constantly the effects of what they perceive or feel. It is only perhaps in some small degree, if at all, that animals choose what they will think. Animals command their *bodies* as they will, but Man commands his *mind* as he wills.

This is what is meant when it is said that Man is endowed with reason; he has power over his thoughts. He can suffer them to flow on without direction; or he can leave them to be influenced by external objects; or he can withdraw his mind entirely from the objects which he sees, hears, feels, tastes, smells: he can attend to one object, and put away others; he can bring together thoughts that are similar; he can look at them together, and perceive wherein they are alike, and wherein they differ: he can frame complete notions, or disjoin them; and he can *imagine* what he has never actually seen. This power over his thoughts enables man to improve his condition to a great extent; because he can combine ideas in various forms, and he can learn how to produce what he has imagined.—*Taylor's Elements of Thought*, pp. 20–26.

and if he is faithful to his trust, no explosion needs to be apprehended.

2. The first reason for not admitting the irresistibleness of circumstances is drawn from the constitution of the mind; the second is drawn from the facts of human life. In the assertion that circumstances form character irresistibly, it is, of course, assumed that they do actually form it. If they do not form it in fact, it is plain they do not form it irresistibly. Now I deny the assumption which lies at the basis of this doctrine; I deny that the character of men is formed by their circumstances. And I put the assumption to three tests. If their external condition irresistibly forms the character of men, its operation must possess three properties; it must be uniform, it must be universal, it must be complete. But in point of fact it is neither.

(1) First, it must be uniform: that is to say, similar circumstances must in all cases produce similar effects; and, in cases where circumstances differ, the difference of the result must be similar and proportionate to the difference of the circumstances. If it be not so, it is plain that something else besides the circumstances must have been in operation, and therefore that their influence is not irresistible. Now we are willing to admit in this matter that the circumstances of no two persons have been precisely similar, and that, consequently, the first part of our proposition in its strictness is of no use to us. We shall find full scope, however, for the application of the second. Let any man decide whether the diversities of men's character are any thing like an accurate counterpart of the diversities of their condition. It cannot be needful for me to specify instances, and to tell how, among children of the same family, and brought up all but precisely in the same method, there are apparent early and wide varieties, while some one, perhaps, breaks away from a tribe of amiable and virtuous youth, to become, without any material variation of circumstances, a brute, a villain, and a vagabond; or how, in dens where all has been ignorant, vicious, and profligate, equal diversities have appeared, and now and then an individual of good sense, good feeling, and virtue, rises, contrary to all expectation, above his fellows. If circumstances not only could but must make Howards, why have they made but one of them? Surely circumstances of sufficiently proximate similarity have occurred often

enough to have produced some nearer approaches to his character than have ever been recognised. But the multiplication of examples is needless. Every body knows that varieties of character are far from accurately corresponding with diversities of condition.

(2) Secondly. If the influence of circumstances upon character were really irresistible, it ought to be universally so. The rule should allow of no exceptions; for the exceptions would be cases in which circumstances have been resisted, and would prove therefore that they are not irresistible. Now certainly the influence of circumstances is not universally irresistible. If it were admitted on the one hand that the character of most men was formed by their circumstances, it would be as readily admitted, I suppose, on the other, that there are cases, however rare, in which men either rise above their circumstances, or fall below them. Here and there, at all events, is a person whose circumstances have been eminently favourable to the formation of a valuable character, which nevertheless he has not formed; and here and there, also, are persons whose mighty mind and native vigour have broke loose from surrounding bonds, and have rather created new circumstances for themselves than become the creatures of those in which they stood. It is clearly proved by the occurrence of such cases, that, although the power of circumstances may be great, it is not insuperable; it is in fact overcome.

(3) Thirdly. The influence of circumstances, if irresistible, should be complete; that is to say, every circumstance in a man's condition should influence him, and the influence of every circumstance should be proportionate to its magnitude. If all the circumstances which make up the condition of a man do not thus contribute to the formation of his character, then it is not correct to say that his character is formed by his circumstances; the truth in this case evidently being that his character is formed by some of his circumstances only, and in this modified form the proposition should be expressed. Such a proposition, however, would be of no service at all in the argument before us; since it would clearly fail to prove the unconquerable power of circumstances, by the implied admission that some in each case do not operate at all. If any thing is to be laid down that has a bearing on our subject, it must be

the broad principle, that all the circumstances in which a man may be placed operate in proportion to their magnitude to the formation of his character. But I challenge the most rigorous observation to ascertain this point; and I cannot hesitate to express my own conviction, that the character of men, not only in general, but in all cases, is only partially influenced by their circumstances. It will be found, I think, on the one hand, that only a portion of their circumstances influence them at all; and on the other, that the circumstances which do influence them are far from doing so proportionately to their magnitude. Let me take the character of an intemperate man for an example. If I am told that his circumstances have made him a drunkard, I ask whether all his circumstances have conspired to the production of this effect; or whether there are not some circumstances in his condition—as his own health and respectability, with the comfort and welfare of his family—which had a tendency to prevent, and have a tendency to cure, his habit of intoxication. These have not made him intemperate, certainly; how is it they have not made and kept him sober? If all his circumstances had operated on him, these must have wrought with the rest; but where is their influence? It is to be found only in the inadequate form of occasional aggravations of his misery and desperation, or in fitful but fruitless resolutions of amendment. Or let us take a case of a more general kind. Men eagerly and exclusively pursue the business or the pleasures of the world; and if I am told that this is the result of their circumstances, I again ask whether it is the result of the whole, or of only a part of them. I admit the attractions of business and of pleasure; but I ask whether the disappointments of life, the certainty of death, and the prospect of futurity, are not circumstances which, on the principle I am combating, must have their influence too. Yet where is it? Who lives as a dying man should live, and an heir of immortality? Or, to select an illustration from among those who admit the authority and believe the truths of the Bible, and yet pursue nothing but the world, if all their circumstances influenced them, surely the vast realities of a future state would do so, and the solemn truths of religion; yet they do not—their character is formed by the things of time, and not by the things of eternity, by the fascinations of the world, and not by the truths of the Gospel.

Let us advert to the case even of the most pious people, upon whom the truths of the Divine Word have an effectual influence; and it will be found here that the influence of circumstances, although none may be absolutely powerless, is not proportionate to their magnitude. They feel the influences both of this world and of the world to come, but not in just proportions; being still actuated far too deeply by the things that are seen and are temporal, and far too slenderly by the things that are unseen and are eternal. To enter more largely into an induction of particulars must be unnecessary; let me only request my readers to try whether an extended examination of cases would not confirm the statement I have made, that the character of men universally, although powerfully influenced by circumstances, is so only partially, and not completely.

It may be replied, that the uninfluential character of some of our circumstances is to be ascribed to their insignificance, and that in every case the strongest circumstances operate to the production of the effect. Let me distinctly understand this reply. The person who speaks of circumstances as stronger or weaker when compared among themselves, may mean one of two things. He may mean that some circumstances have produced a stronger effect upon the mind in a given case than others; or he may mean that some circumstances are in themselves, or rather, are as they would be estimated by every considerate man, adapted to exert a stronger influence than others. The former of these statements has no bearing whatever upon the argument; it is merely another mode of stating the fact which we have to explain. The latter only is to the point, and in this sense I shall understand the reply. To take the intemperate man, for example, it would in this case be represented, that the circumstances which tended to make him a drunkard were more powerful in their adaptation to influence a rational being than those which tended to restrain him from drunkenness; the former being the pleasures of the palate, and the latter being his own respectability, property, health, and life, together with the blessings of domestic love, and the entire happiness and welfare of his family. On behalf of the unbeliever addicted to worldly pursuits it would be represented, that the pleasures and gains of a short period, perhaps of a moment, are more powerfully adapted to move him than the

consideration of death and futurity; and on behalf of the worldly-minded believer in revelation, that earthly attractions are fitted to actuate him more strongly than all he knows of God and duty, of his danger and its remedy, of death and judgment, of hell and heaven. Whether such representations would be just I can only ask every one to consider and decide for himself. A man whose judgment coincides with them is beyond the reach of arguments.

We come now, without further obstruction, to our conclusion, that the character of men is influenced only partially by their circumstances; and that, since, in each case, some circumstances either do not operate at all, or do not operate proportionately to their magnitude, the power of his external condition upon the character of man is not absolute and irresistible, but, on the contrary, is capable of modification.

To this it may be answered, True; the influence of circumstances may be modified by that of temperament, as this is also an influential power affecting human character, and as the influence of temperament in its turn may be modified by that of circumstances; but neither can be modified by any thing else. My rejoinder is, that I want the proof of this assertion. I ask, on the contrary, whether there is any thing contradictory or absurd in supposing that the influence of circumstances may be modified by some other cause or causes—say consideration, for example—as well as by temperament; or in supposing that the influence of temperament may be modified by the same cause or causes, as well as by circumstances. Temperament and circumstances may be two sources of action upon human character; but it does not follow from this that they are the only ones. For all that is yet proved to the contrary there may be others, by which both of these may be modified or restrained. And facts, I think, demonstrate that there is at least one, and that is voluntary thought, or, as I have expressed it above, consideration. That we have a power of voluntary thought I have endeavoured to show already, and need not repeat the proof; what I have here to say is, that it is a well adapted source of influence upon human character. The exercise of it is the determining cause and measure of the power with which all objects affect us. It is that which makes every object to be, not indeed what it is in itself, but *what it is to us*. By means of it we have the faculty of making objects

practically to be or not to be, and of rendering them either very powerfully or very slightly influential on ourselves, in proportion to the consideration we devote to them. It is, in point of fact, upon this principle that the variable results of similar circumstances and temperaments are to be explained. Some moving considerations are to some men as though they were not, because they are overlooked or forgotten; while trifles become powerfully exciting by perpetually occupying their thoughts. If this engagement of the thoughts be voluntary—a point not here to be argued again—then here is manifest at once a selection on our part, out of the whole elements of our condition, of those under the influence of which we really act, and undeniable proof of the existence within us of a modifying and controlling power.

The conclusion to which we are now come (assuming its justice, of which, of course, the reader must judge for himself) has important practical bearings. If it be true, it is no longer to be conceived that our condition makes us; it may rather be affirmed that we make our condition. Specific circumstances have no practical existence to us farther than we give our attention to them. It is this voluntary exercise of our minds which, as to us, gives them reality; it may be said to create them. Without it, however great, numerous, or urgent, they are practical nonentities; they are as though they were not. We really live in the midst of our own cherished thoughts, which may truly be said to constitute the scenery through which we pass, and the world in which we exist.

Before parting with this subject, I wish to observe, that, although I have been arguing against the notion that the character of men *is* formed by circumstances, I do not mean to assert that it *ought not* to be so. When it is considered that the circumstances in which we are placed have not been determined by ourselves, but by the arrangement or permission of a benevolent, wise, and just Creator, it would be a very painful sentiment to entertain that the influence of circumstances, even if it were irresistible, should make us what we ought not to be. It is, on the contrary, I think, a just as well as a pleasing thought, that God, who requires of us a specific course, has so arranged our circumstances as a whole, that, if we be attentive and considerate *of them all*, we shall infallibly fulfil his requirement. It is true, he has

placed us in contact with some circumstances affording inducements to evil, but he has presented to us also inducements to good, not only of equal, but of unspeakably greater power. Did a man but realize the contents of both worlds, would he prefer time? Did a man but ponder the claims of duty and the sources of happiness, would he love sin and devote himself to folly? Never. Nothing better can be wished for men, as, certainly, nothing more is required by their Maker, than that their character should be formed by their circumstances—that is, by *all* of them; and that they should give to them all that just consideration, in which may be said to be concentrated the whole of man's welfare and of God's commands.

3. One more source of alleged constraint on human actions detains us for a few moments: it is *divine predestination.* Even if men might otherwise act freely, we are told, they cannot really do so, since God has predestinated all things, and therefore the actions of men.

In considering the question whether the act of God in predestination determines the actions of men, it must undoubtedly be admitted that the affirmative has been held by a large class both of philosophers and divines. For my own part I admit also, that divine predestination is both a fact in philosophy and a doctrine of Scripture—in the former view undeniable, and in the latter most glorious and important. But the question is yet fairly to be asked, *What is it* that God has fore-ordained? Is it all things, or only a part of them?

If the views I have advocated be correct (and of course I write upon this supposition), the agency existing in the universe is not altogether simple and undivided. Contemplated in the widest sense, it may be distinguished into two grand divisions: the first comprehending the actions of God, whether direct or through the instrumentality of physical causes; and the second the actions of beings endowed by him, as mankind are, with a faculty of acting for themselves. These departments of action are clearly different and distinct; and it may be so that God pursues respecting them dissimilar courses. His own actions, moreover, are divisible into two classes; the one comprising those which may be called spontaneous, or such as arise from the impulses of his own nature simply; and the other those which originate from the fore-

seen conduct of other beings, to which it is necessary they should be adapted. He may have pursued different courses in relation to these two classes of his own actions, his predestination of each corresponding with the character of each. There is again a difference among those actions of God which are founded upon his fore-knowledge of the conduct of other intelligent beings; some of these are acts of kindness, others are acts of righteous severity; and he may have pursued a different course respecting these. It is possible, further, that the divine predestination may have a different character in different cases: in one case it may have respect to persons, in another to principles; in one case the tenor of it may be that such beings shall be affected, in another that such rules shall be carried out whoever may be affected by them. It seems to me unreasonable to confound all these differences in one all-absorbing notion of predestination. I think we are neither required nor warranted to believe that, in these diversified operations, God has pursued an absolute and unmodified course.

If I am asked what my views are upon this matter, I reply that I make no question whether God predetermined his own actions. I cannot conceive of a wise being acting otherwise, or of any other interpretation of the language of Holy Writ. Neither do I question for a moment whether God foreknew the actings of all those beings whom he qualified to act for themselves. I cannot conceive of his forming the scheme of his own conduct without incorporating in his plan the foreseen conduct of others. But what I think may be questioned, and what, for my own part, I do not believe, is that God predetermined the actions of men. I cannot with any gravity entertain a conception so absurd as that God should first endow beings to act independently of him, and then, grasping them by his decrees, predetermine their actions. Neither do I see any thing in the Scriptures that requires to be so understood.

I may be reminded of the operations of divine grace on the heart; but I see nothing in them that needs to be differently explained. I know that God has chosen some to eternal life, and that the attainment of this happiness involves a change in them, which also, of course, he has predetermined to effect; but it is enough in this case that he should have fore-ordained *his own* doings, and not theirs. He regenerates

them; very well—regeneration is strictly his work, and not theirs. He makes them willing in the day of his power: again I say, very well—here is an exertion of his own power, which of course he predetermined; and here is also a resulting course of voluntary action on their part, which, no doubt, he foresaw and calculated upon, but which it was neither appropriate nor necessary that he should fore-ordain.

It will of course be remembered here that, although God is declared in the Scriptures to exercise an influence on the hearts of men for holy and benevolent ends, he is not represented as doing so for evil purposes, or as implicating himself in any way with the iniquities and ruin of wicked men.

I hold, then, and I deem it consistent both with the declarations of Scripture and the doctrines of grace, that God, having endowed mankind with faculties for acting independently of himself, exercises within the sphere of that action no predetermining power over their conduct. Having constituted man to become an originator of purposes, he permits him unconstrained to carry them into execution. He means to bring him into judgment, and he leaves him free.

Lest this statement of my views should be deemed sophistical, inasmuch as it cannot well be consistent with the idea that God has fore-ordained the ungodly to perdition, it may be needful to say that I do not hold this sentiment, which, however, is too common. I see neither necessity nor warrant for believing that God has predestinated any man to destruction. It is enough in this respect that he has ordained general principles, the operation of which accomplishes, without personal predestination, the punishment of transgressors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOURTH ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY; OR WHETHER MEN ARE ABLE TO PERFORM WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THEM.

As a fourth element of responsibility we have admitted *competency* to the action required. We have now to inquire whether this also is to be found in the nature and condition of mankind.

Our way must be made on this part of our subject by ascertaining the nature and amount of that action which God requires of men. We may regard as the sources of our information on this point the law and the Gospel; the former being the divine rule for man's conduct as a creature, the latter having the same relation to him as a sinner, and both together comprising the total amount of his Maker's requirements. The moral law—without either necessity, warrant, or wisdom, generally regarded as summed up in the ten commandments—may be safely taken from the lips of our Lord and Saviour, when he replied to the question, "Which is the greatest commandment of all?" "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There are none other commandments greater than these." Mark xi. 29–31. Our Lord here evidently exhibits the whole of man's duty as a creature, first in its simple character of love, and then in its two comprehensive divisions of love to God and man. The duty of man as a sinner is clearly set forth in the precept, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel," Mark i. 15; and in another not less appropriate or comprehensive, "Be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. vi. 20. The question now before us is whether mankind are able to fulfil these requirements.

I am by no means unaware of the difficulty of the question I have thus raised, or of the negative answer to it which has long been given by the majority of Christian professors, and would still be given by many. Fairness in the argument,

however, required me to raise the question; and I shall endeavour to find my way honestly to a satisfactory solution of it.

I shall not try to facilitate my answer to this inquiry by saying that God is willing to afford help to all who may seek it, or that he encourages our efforts by promises to do so. As, on the one hand, I see no consistency between these opinions and the general scheme of evangelical truth, so, on the other, I deem it but treacherous help they could afford me in the present argument. I cannot but admit that, if it is to be shown that the proper elements of responsibility are extant in the nature and condition of men, it must be made to appear that they can do what is required of them by employing the faculties which have been given them.

In looking at the precepts addressed to man by his Maker, the first point that requires to be examined is the nature of the action demanded from him. What is it that God will have us to do? The answer to this question is brief and simple: it is *to love*. That this is the nature of the action required by the law is obvious, since the precept runs in these terms, love God, love your neighbour. Nor less is it the spirit of the precepts of the Gospel; since love is evidently the essence of reconciliation and repentance, and of faith also, considered in what I deem its proper light as an act of submission to God's method of mercy. All that God requires of us, then, is resolvable into this one general element of love, diversified somewhat in its aspect, as conceived to be exercised on the one hand by a creature who has not sinned, and on the other by a creature who has.

The general nature of the action required of us, we thus find, is to love; that is to say, to produce and maintain in our minds, by the exercise of our natural faculties, this affection towards prescribed objects.

I may now take one step towards answering the question before us, by observing that the nature of the action required of us corresponds with the structure and faculties of the mind. I have already said that the mind of man seems to consist of a substance (not material) possessing an essential and permanent susceptibility of feeling of various kinds; now love is one of these kinds of feeling, and belongs to that class of things, therefore, of which the mind is susceptible. I have said also, that the affections of the mind are excited

by objects perceived; and that (as subsequently shown*) they are subject to excitement and regulation by a power of voluntary thought. Now, to require us to exercise love is, in terms still more simple, to require us to produce an affection of the mind; and this is certainly no inappropriate requirement of a being who is both made to feel, and endowed with a faculty of exciting and governing his feelings. There is nothing, then, in the nature of the action required that is out of harmony with the nature of man. It is not like expecting a machine of one kind to produce action of another—a clock to do the work of a steam-engine, for example. It is only looking to the clock to tell the hour of the day. The production of feeling is a process to which the human mind is competent; it is in fact carried on continually, and may be instituted at any time by directing our thoughts towards any suitable object.

The next element of the question which meets us is the quality of the affection which we are called upon to produce. It is *love*. By this term, as employed by God in expressing his requirements of man, I understand *benevolence*, to the exclusion of the idea of complacency; a point on which I know an argument may be held, but an argument too long to be held here. It is enough for me to explain my own meaning. God requires of us to produce benevolence. Now benevolence is a feeling of which our minds are readily susceptible; and as, on the one hand, we are able to produce affections of the mind in general, so, on the other, are we able to produce the affection of benevolence in particular, by directing our thoughts to an object suited to this purpose.

We come, then, to this further inquiry: What amount of benevolence does God require we should generate? Does this exceed the productive powers of the human mind?

In replying to these questions, let us first examine the precepts addressed to us as sinners. We are called on to be reconciled to God, that is, to produce love towards God instead of enmity. Now the enmity we have hitherto felt towards God has been produced by ourselves; and therefore, since we have been able to produce enmity, we must of course be able to produce love. And not only so; whatever amount of enmity we may have produced heretofore, it is

* Page 444.

plain that we are able to produce an equal amount of love; since it would be altogether groundless and absurd to suppose that we possess naturally a power of generating more of hatred than of benevolence. Now to generate love as we have hitherto generated enmity, is the precise thing required of us when we are bidden to be reconciled to God; and therefore to be reconciled to him is within our power.

With respect to the precepts addressed to us as creatures we may have more difficulty, in consequence of an erroneous view which has very generally prevailed respecting them. It has been considered that the moral law constitutes a perfect and inflexible standard of rectitude, and requires an absolute perfection of character, and the same perfection in all circumstances. Something of mistake, I think, lurks here. To make good this representation, the moral law should consist of a definition of righteousness in the abstract, and challenge our conformity to that pattern. This, however, is evidently not the case. On the contrary, the moral law is composed exclusively of precepts addressed to mankind, and refers to nothing but the use of those faculties with which we are endowed. Its relation is not to virtue, but to man; and accordingly it enjoins, not a conformity to an abstract standard, but the prescribed employment of existing powers. Let its language be again heard. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:" that is to say, with all the fervour which the exercise of your natural faculties may kindle, these natural faculties constituting *the strength* which the law of God contemplates, and requires to be employed. That which the law of God requires is, therefore, rather a shifting than a fixed element; a contribution to the divine glory according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. Its requisition is far from being stern and inflexible; it is on the contrary variable, and this not merely to a great extent, but through the whole compass of human capacity. If, as has been alleged, some men have more strength to keep God's commandments than others, or if man before the fall had more strength for this purpose than he had after it, in precise accordance with all these diversities, real or supposed, does the law vary its demand. The precept is, "Love—with all thy strength;" and it is certainly as pliable and accommodating as can be desired. God requires no less

than our strength—why should he?—and clearly no more. We are therefore able to do all that he requires; since that is no more than to employ what means we have of producing a certain affection of the mind.

I come thus, and I hope in a conclusive and satisfactory manner, to the conclusion that men do possess a competency to do all that for which God holds them responsible; and therefore that this necessary element of responsibility actually exists. Aware as I am that this subject is beset with many theological difficulties and objections, I may yet be excused from entering upon them here, inasmuch as it would lead to a direct repetition of that which has already been some years before the public in a separate treatise. Should my reader be desirous of ascertaining the value of that system of *cannot-ism* (I use an American term) which has too long poisoned our current theology, but which I trust is gradually losing its influence, I beg to refer him to a volume which has, as the author has reason to know, been blessed to many, and publicly controverted by none.*

The question, Towards whom God requires us to generate benevolence, will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIFTH ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: OR WHETHER MEN ACT IN VIEW OF SUFFICIENT MOTIVES.

I HAVE stated it to be a further element of responsibility that men should act *in view of sufficient motives;* and I have now to pursue the inquiry whether, with respect to the demands of our Maker upon us, this also is the fact.

It is proper that I should here recal the explanation of the term *motive* which I have given in a former page. A motive may be either a consideration adapted to excite us to action, or a state of our feelings impelling us to act. Of course it is not in the latter sense that I use the term here.

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* On the Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion.

I speak now of motives as considerations adapted to persuade.

It is proper to recal, also, the explanation I have already given of my meaning when I speak of a *sufficient* motive. A sufficient motive is not one which actually prevails, but one which would prevail if it were duly considered.

The position I have to maintain, then, is, that God has surrounded man with sufficient motives to pursue the conduct he requires of him; that is to say, with facts and considerations which, if he duly weighs them, will induce him to pursue it.

I here challenge in the first place a survey of the requirements addressed by God to man, in connexion with the motives presented to him; taking for granted (as of course I must here, for the sake of the argument) the authority of the Sacred Scriptures, and the solidity of the ground I have in the preceding chapters been endeavouring to establish.

God requires us to love him; that is, as I understand this precept, to cherish towards him a deep and fervent benevolence, or (to use a plainer word) good-will. By what persuasive does he second his demand? He sets forth that he is the author of our being, and of all our capacities and opportunities of worthy and happy action; in one word, our father. Has a parent no title to the respect and kindness of a child? Or is there any person on earth who would justify a child in regarding his parent with alienation? Now thus with the Lord, "If I be a father, where is my fear?"

God calls on us to be thankful. And is this without cause? Is our place in the scale of creatures nothing? Our rational faculties, and the means of cultivating them to the attainment of most felicitous results, are these nothing? The rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness; the constant protection both of the day and the night; the innumerable sources of pleasure, personal, domestic, and social, are all these nothing? And nothing as received from the condescending care and overflowing bounty of a Being so glorious? True, we have sorrows too: but do these really annihilate our benefactor's entire title to the gratitude he seeks? May all his favours properly be consumed without thanks? Is there no justice in his claim that we should render again according to the kindness done unto us?

God calls on us to render him service, to obey his will.

And what, again, are the motives enforcing his demand? That, as our Creator, he has a clear right to become our governor too, and to challenge into competent action the faculties he has given, meeting obedience or disobedience respectively with his favour or rebuke. In having thus assumed the throne has he done his creatures wrong? Or in the commands or sanctions of his reign is there injustice? If there be, let it be exposed and repelled; but if not—and it is on this assumption that I argue—why should a dominion so righteous be resisted? Or how can it be resisted without criminality? Is a creature guilty of no wrong who sets himself up against the authority and glory of his creator?

We have been disobedient to him, and God commands us to repent; that is, to be sorry for our disobedience, and to repeat it no more. To enforce this command he tells us that our disobedience has been criminal; that it has subjected us to fearful consequences; that he is ready to forgive; that he has made preparation at infinite cost to put away our iniquity; and that he waits to be gracious to us. These surely are appropriate and powerful persuasives.

We have been enemies to him, and God calls on us to be reconciled; that is, to subdue our aversion to him, and to become his friends. To such a course he persuades by opening to us, on the one hand, the guilt and doom of his enemies, and, on the other, the blessedness and privileges of his friends. He presents to us the touching method to which he has had recourse for our recovery from impending ruin, in the gift and sufferings of his Son; and humbles himself to the marvellous and overcoming attitude of entreaty, while his ministers, as though God did beseech us by them, pray us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. And is there really in all this nothing adapted to prevail?

More fully to appreciate these considerations, they should be regarded in contrast with those which are opposed to them. What are the persuasives to irreligion? And whence are they drawn? They are drawn, not only altogether from this world in utter forgetfulness of the next, but from the least worthy aspects of this world—from pleasure, wealth, ambition—in a word, from whatever is evanescent, selfish, and sinful. Of this class is all that can be arrayed against the motives by which our Maker pleads with us. The weight of eternity, and the powers of the world to come, are

his; and his are all the considerations which relate to our true dignity, interest, and happiness, as well as those which arise out of love, duty, and righteousness. Certainly the force of argument is on his side. No question can for a moment be entertained whether the reasons for loving and serving God be or be not more adapted to prevail with a being capable of appreciating them, than those for hating and disobeying him. If they were duly weighed, would not such a being be persuaded by them?

It might seem that, having arrived at this point, we had made good the position we are concerned to maintain; namely, that God has furnished us with sufficient motives to the course he requires of us. We are, however, still met by objectors. There are persons who, admitting that the better reasons are on the side of duty and religion, yet assure us that, however much they may be pondered, they will not prevail with men; and that, therefore, in the sense in which I have used the term *sufficient*, they are not sufficient reasons.

I confess myself startled by this assertion; but, as surprise is no argument, I must endeavour to treat it gravely. If, then, it be so that these persuasive considerations, when duly pondered, will not act according to their tendency, I ask, Why not? In this matter the structure and operations of the mind are clearly on my side. It is a fact, as I suppose undeniable, that considerations in general act upon us according to their apparent force, as far as they engage our attention; and if this be not the case with religious considerations it constitutes a remarkable exception to the rule, and must be accounted for by a special explanation.

I am aware of the explanation which is ready to be offered. It is that mankind are fallen and depraved. Most fully do I admit this fact; but I now ask, in perfect seriousness, what it is that I am expected to admit as a deduction from it. To be pertinent, the inference should be this: because men are fallen and depraved, religious truths will not affect them when reflected on—since this is the thing which I have asserted, and which the objector denies. I yet ask again, however, whether this is the inference in which I am expected to acquiesce; inasmuch as, when put in this plain manner, I can scarcely believe it possible this should be affirmed. I will say a few words, nevertheless, on the supposition that this is the case.

And I observe, first, that, if the effect of man's fall be to prevent truths of any class, when reflected on, from acting on his feelings according to their nature, then the fall has materially interfered with the operation of his rational faculties, and must be deemed to have impaired the structure of his mind. In such a state men are no longer sane; and, on every principle of equity, they should be exempted from religious obligation and responsibility altogether.

To this it may be added, that there is no reason whatever to suppose that the fall of man has produced such an effect. The opinion is contradicted by experience. Religious truths *do* influence men's minds in proportion as they are reflected on. I know, indeed, that many scholars and divines have studied the Scriptures for the purposes of criticism and controversy without having their hearts affected by them; but this is nothing to the purpose, inasmuch as neither the matters they were contemplating, nor the purposes for which they were contemplating them, are relevant to the point in hand. I speak of men who are thinking of the truths of religion in a way of application to their persuasive purpose; and I may affirm safely that in proportion as they think they feel. What else will account for the uneasiness so often generated in the mind of an ungodly person by some religious topic, or for the necessity of having recourse to company, pleasure, or business, to restore forgetfulness and tranquillity? What else will explain the uniform connexion between habits of thoughtfulness and the production of piety; or that which appears with equal uniformity between forgetfulness and the too-numerous instances of evanescent impression? Will any one accept the challenge which I now give to adduce instances—I may say a single instance—in which religious thoughts do not, according to their duration and intensity, produce a corresponding effect on the feelings? Will any one explain to me why else it is that wicked men are with so much difficulty led to reflection, and that exhortations to it are so continually met with the reply, "I dread to think; it makes me miserable"? Is it not a fact to which the consciences of the ungodly will bear instant witness, that the only means they have of living undisturbed in sin is to forget the truths of religion; so making use of their inconsideration as a shield against the arrows which, could their attention once be gained, would infallibly pierce them to the heart?

Besides, upon the supposition I am combating, how unintelligible, how absurd, is the entire system of the evangelical ministry! The Scriptures exhibit it as adapted to persuade men. Herein God speaks to them, and bids them hearken and incline their ear, as being about to say things which, if they will hearken to them, will exert an influence on their minds. But we are now told that, although men should hearken to divine pleadings, these will exert no influence! Where then is the use of demanding their attention, and of complaining so bitterly that it is withheld? It is henceforth nothing more than an artifice and a mockery.

The notion which is thus rejected by experience, and at variance with the design of the Gospel ministry, is utterly unsupported by the Scriptures. They teach us, it is true, that man is a fallen and depraved creature, and that his depravity gravely influences his treatment of religious truth; what they declare upon this point, however, is not that religious truth meditated on will not affect men's minds, but that men will not meditate on it. They do not like to retain God in their knowledge. They will not hearken, or incline their ear to instruction. This sentiment, I must beg to observe, is widely different from the other, and, so far from sanctioning it, accords altogether with that for which I am contending—namely, that religious truth, *when reflected on*, will operate on the minds of men without any exception.

If it should further be alleged that religious motives cannot be deemed sufficient, inasmuch as they do not prevail, and inasmuch as no persons, unless moved by the Spirit of God, ever were or ever will be prevailed on by them, I must beg to protest against the confusion, both of ideas and of terms, thus introduced. It is not because a motive actually prevails that we call it a *sufficient* one; the proper term in that case is *efficient*, or *effectual*, which I have nowhere asserted religious motives alone to be. Neither is it because a motive has never prevailed, and never will prevail, that we are to set it down as *insufficient;* the proper term in this case is *inefficient*, or *ineffectual*, which I freely admit religious motives, with all their power, to be. But I affirm that they are so because men do not weigh and consider them; and in full consistency with this I maintain that, if men would consider religious truth, they would become religious men. Although not *efficient* (through our thoughtlessness), the motives which

God sets before us are *sufficient*—that is, they would prevail if we would weigh them.

The existence of the fifth element of responsibility I now consider as demonstrated.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIXTH ELEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: OR WHETHER MEN ACT UNDER AN ADEQUATE IMPULSE.

In addition to the elements of responsibility already considered, I have admitted to be necessary the existence of *an adequate impulse.* To explain my meaning in one sentence: If God requires us to choose one particular course out of many, it is reasonable that he should cause to be generated within us a stronger impulse to the selection of that course than we may be liable to feel to the adoption of any other.

Our inquiry whether in point of fact there exists within us any such impulse towards the course which (according to the Scriptures) God requires us to pursue, involves a preliminary question. Contemplating generally our impulses to action, and taking a survey of their number and variety, we ask are they all of equal strength; or are any of them of greater power than the rest. Of course I do not propose this question in relation to their actual influence, or as synonymous with the question, do all our impulses equally prevail. Nor can I at all admit that the impulses which prevail most are therefore to be set down as the most powerful. The prevalence of impulses over us depends not upon their intrinsic power, but upon the entertainment we give them. To say that certain impulses prevail with us, is more truly to say that we yield to them, and to express the measure, not so much of their power, as of our inclination. We may yield to the weaker impulse and resist the stronger, as in truth we continually do. Apart from the consideration of their prevalence, our impulses have power, that is, an adaptation to prevalence, in themselves; and what we ask is whether they have all the same power. We think it obvious

that they have not. The power of our impulses exhibits endless diversities. Scarcely in any two individuals has the same impulse the same power, and scarcely in a single individual have any two impulses the same power.

This diversity in the power of our constitutional impulses being recognized, we propose another question: Is there any one which has a power uniformly superior to all the rest? Upon a moment's reflection, the answer to this question will appear not less obvious than that to the former. Let us try it. Some impulses arise from our appetites, others from our propensities; some from pride, some from ambition, some from love of gain, some from a sense of danger, some from a sense of duty: these impulses may all vary in strength, but is any one class of them always stronger than the rest? Yes, one of them is so; it is the class of impulses arising out of a sense of duty. Every person who will examine what passes in his own mind will see that the sense of duty gives origin to emotions of uniformly greater strength than any other. I do not mean that they are more vehement, but that there is a tone of dictation and authority in them which is possessed by no other. The various impulses translated into words might be rendered respectively as follows: I should *like* to do it—I am *afraid* to do it—I *ought* to do it. Duty is a thing which our minds are so constituted as always to place first; and it never is and never can be a question with us, whether interest, pleasure, or any other consideration, can properly be allowed to prevail against it, or to be put in comparison with it.

Among our constitutional impulses, then, one class holds a supremacy, and this class is composed of our moral sentiments, or of the impulses which arise from our sense of duty. Now our sense of duty has an immediate relation to rectitude and the will of God; it is this to which God primarily addresses those precepts and appeals by which he requires us to be guided; and by giving an unquestioned supremacy to its dictates, he has supplied us with an adequate impulse to the preference he demands.

The reader will perceive that, in the preceding passage, although I have not mentioned the name, I have been speaking of that element of human nature called Conscience. I have hitherto avoided the word, because I wished to arrive at the thing intended by it with greater simplicity than would

have been practicable amidst the explanations which the use of it renders immediately necessary, and to which I will now proceed.

Some writers have regarded conscience as an original and simple faculty of man, and have given it a place in their lists of such faculties accordingly. I am not disposed to concur in this view. It seems to me rather that conscience is a term which expresses a compound idea, and not a simple one; an idea made up of three elements existent in the mind.

1. The first of these is the faculty of perceiving moral distinctions, or of receiving and retaining the idea of right and wrong. You can convey these ideas and all their cognates to a child, and with him they become ever afterwards practical elements of his whole life, as it were parts of his very nature. But you cannot accomplish a similar process with irrational creatures. What most nearly resembles it in the training of dogs and some other animals is so obviously resolvable into the influence of pleasure and pain, that I can scarcely conceive of it as gravely adduced in exception to the observation I have made. This, then, is the first element in the composition of what we term conscience.

2. The second is the aptitude of the mind to form moral judgments, or, which is the same thing, to form a judgment of actions as good or evil. That such an aptitude exists can be matter of no question. Whatever we see done, whether by others or by ourselves, the question whether it is right or wrong is never indifferent to us. In its contemplation of human conduct the mind is ever on the watch for these qualities, both as the most important in the action, and as the most interesting to itself; so that, without either intention or effort, there is constituted within us a sort of tribunal, before which both other men's conduct and our own is continually undergoing the process of an involuntary judgment. This aptitude and habit of moral judgment is the second element of conscience.

3. The third is a susceptibility of pleasure and pain from our moral judgments. The fact is familiar, that we are always affected more or less, and sometimes intensely affected, by our opinion of our own conduct. We feel satisfaction if we think we have done right, and pain if we think we have done wrong. Our moral judgments as naturally and immediately affect us as any other causes of pleasure and pain,

whether physical or mental. It is true that much may be done to blunt our sensibility in this respect, as, in like manner, much may be done to blunt our other sensibilities; but indifference to our moral judgments is nevertheless not natural, but artificial. It might as truly be said that we have a natural indifference to hunger and thirst, to prosperity or adversity, as to the praise or censure of our own minds.

Of these three elements—a capacity to perceive moral differences, an aptitude to form moral judgments, and a sensibility to the moral judgments we form of ourselves—I conceive that what we term conscience is made up. It is not so much a faculty of the mind, as a mode of action. It is undoubtedly a most important part of the constitution of man, and subserves an indispensable purpose in relation to moral government. As we have already admitted, if there be one thing which a man ought to do more than any other of the many presented to him, it is clear that he ought to be supplied with an adequate impulse to it. And the impulse to what God requires of us is supplied by the existence and supremacy of our moral sentiments.

It has been much questioned, however, whether, after all, conscience is fit for its purpose; and, indeed, by some the contrary has been strenuously maintained. We must therefore gird ourselves for a little further discussion.

We have been told that, in order to make conscience of any use, it should have been supplied with innate ideas of right and wrong, and an entire standard of morals; that, as it is, men's notions of good and evil are just such as happen to be given them, in scarcely two instances alike, and in some the very reverse of others.

Much of this, of course, I am obliged to admit. I am not taken by surprise when I am told that the Spartans reckoned well-concealed thefts meritorious, or that the Charibs applauded the devouring of their fellow-creatures for food. Moreover, I am no advocate of the doctrine of innate ideas; I do not believe in either the existence or the possibility of them. On the contrary, I am quite willing to admit that we learn all we know, and that we learn it chiefly from those who teach us. It hence follows, no doubt, that ideas of right and wrong both imperfect and erroneous are generally, perhaps universally acquired; so that the dictates of a man's conscience, or his moral judgments, may by no

means be assumed to be always in accordance with rectitude. The conscience may be either uninstructed, as to a great extent a pagan's now is, or ill-instructed, as Paul's was when he thought murdering the disciples of Christ was doing God service. And we thus arrive at the conclusion, which I do not question for a moment, that, as conscience neither furnishes nor possesses a standard, so it is altogether an insufficient guide. That a man is conscientious in any matter is no proof that he is right; with equal conscientiousness he may do either good or evil.

With all these admissions, what do I then retain of the alleged value and utility of conscience?

In reply to this question I may observe first, that we are not left in absolute darkness.

Some elements for the formation of right moral judgments are prepared by the exercises of our own minds. Although not born in the possession of knowledge, one of the sources from which we may acquire it lies within our own bosom. Powerfully affected by various and dissimilar impulses, these impulses themselves become to us objects of appreciation and comparison; and the idea of right and wrong arising within us as naturally as that of colour or melody, when the appropriate elements are presented to us, our sentiments concerning our own impulses come to be referred to this as a standard. The judgments thus arising are perhaps among the earliest we form, and, although far from uniformly right, they are always partially so. This view appears to have been in the mind of the apostle, when he penned the important passage in Rom. ii. 12. He there tells us that the Gentiles "did by nature the things contained in the law," meaning, of course, the moral and not the ceremonial law: and he adds that this "showed the work of the law written in their hearts," or, as I understand these words, that, under their natural impulses, they did in part what the unknown law required, in consequence of "their thoughts" being perpetually employed in either condemning or approving them. And as we gather some portion of knowledge on moral subjects from the observation of what passes within, we may obtain a further portion from reflection on that which passes without us. Our aptitude to approve or disapprove what we see in others furnishes us gradually with rules which we afterwards apply to ourselves. To these remarks it may be

added, that what we learn from others, although it may be extensively erroneous, is probably far from being entirely so. In relation to the duty of man truth has evidently been in the world; and men's mistakes on this subject indicate, not so much a positive ignorance, as an imperfect knowledge. Their errors are the remnants of truths, and their foolishness is the corruption of wisdom. Their darkness is not the absolute darkness of a region in which light never was, but the comparative darkness of one from which the light of day has departed. Some light remains, some knowledge, some wisdom, though in many cases painfully little; it is enough, however, to invalidate the allegation of unmitigated ignorance.

To this feature it may be added, secondly, that even an ill-informed conscience furnishes a restraint which is just and salutary. If a man may not be safe in acting according to his conscience, he is certainly unsafe in acting contrary to it. If by any considerations he is led towards a step which his conscience at the time condemns, that step, although possibly right in itself, cannot be right to him while his conscience condemns it. It would, on the contrary, be wrong in an agent to do what was right in itself, unless he perceived and was convinced of its rectitude. Hence the scriptural maxim, Rom. xiv. ult., "Whatsoever is not of full persuasion is sinful." A person in every case is under obligation to institute inquiry, and to make faithful use of all accessible means for satisfying his judgment; but to nothing more until his judgment is satisfied. He would violate his duty if he were to exceed this limit. A considerable restraint is thus imposed by the conscience upon the actions of men; and this restraint is just and salutary, even when imposed by a conscience comparatively unenlightened. It is sure to restrain from much evil; it can restrain from what may be known to be right only for a time; and the right from which it may for a time restrain could not have the effect of rectitude while the conscience forbade it.

I observe thirdly, that the means of obtaining information adapted to enlighten the conscience bear a direct relation and ratio to men's responsibility. The honest employment of such means is the precise effort which God requires, and no farther than God has afforded them will he hold men responsible. He calls on men to walk in the light exactly

in the degree in which he has given them light; in whatever measure *he* has left them in darkness, in the same measure he will exempt them from judgment. If, therefore, the conscience be apt and adequate to the employment of our actual means of knowledge, it is adequate to the whole of its purpose. The measure of our light being that of our responsibility also, if our conscience can avail itself of the light it is enough; no mischief can result from its having no adaptation to act in the dark.

I observe fourthly, that God has made provision for all the means of knowledge which men possess being turned to account, by constituting a relation between truth and the mind. It is an ultimate fact in our nature that truth has an adaptation to the mind, as savours have an adaptation to the palate, sounds to the ear, and light to the eye. Truth naturally approves itself to the understanding rather than error; and, when fairly presented (which, of course, is implied in the statement), has not only the better chance, but the certainty of being received, if the action of the understanding be not perverted, as by prejudice or passion. Hence it is that an ill-instructed conscience is capable of becoming better instructed, and that erroneous moral judgments may be rectified by better information. Wrong notions of morals have thus no permanent lodgment in the mind; but, whatever may be their amount or length of occupation, they may one and all be ejected by the presentation of more accurate views. Hence it results also that, while erroneous moral judgments may be dislodged from the conscience, correct ones cannot, or cannot without great difficulty. Once understood and admitted there, they naturally assume a fixed position among the elements of our moral being, somewhat analogous to that of the maxims of common law, or the statutes of the realm, in a court of judicature. It is in consequence of this that some attempts to alter a man's views of what is right altogether fail; while in other instances, where the opinion seems to be changed, it is rather the opinion held by the feelings than the conscience, which at seasons unwelcomely whispers that its judgment is the same as ever.

This leads me to observe fifthly, that conscience is remarkably characterized by fidelity to the light it has. Many things may prevent the discernment of truth, and render it unwelcome to the heart; but, truth once discerned, in the

conscience every thing is done. There is neither delay nor hesitation in admitting it. There is neither refusal to place it among its kindred elements in the mind, nor perversion nor distortion of it to the shape or purpose of error. Conscience is always honest. It can be neither bribed nor intimidated. It is absolutely incorruptible. You may induce a man to commit a thousand frauds, and even to disguise and falsify his judgment; but you can never make him judge otherwise in morals than he perceives to be right.

These considerations, I think, make it appear that, notwithstanding the imperfections which have been noticed, the conscience is really fitted for its work. Its imperfections, indeed, in no way differ from those which are attached to other instruments of our present action. Take the eye, for example. Every body knows that the eye may deceive us, and that vision may be obscured, even to blindness: yet, since the errors of the eye may be corrected according to the means of correct vision, the eye is conducive to the useful activity of mankind. In morals conscience may be said to be the eye of the mind; and although it has imperfections incident to the nature of man, it is yet proper and adequate to his direction.

It remains to notice the power of conscience in enforcing its judgments. We have already observed that they are connected with an immediate sense of pleasure or pain; but its force of rebuke when its dictates have been disregarded is far more considerable, and in its more vehement exercise altogether extraordinary. Generally speaking, indeed, self-condemnation is one of the most harrowing of feelings. Keenly alive as we are to the opinions which others form of us, we are far more tenderly sensible to those which we form of ourselves. Above the former it is comparatively easy to elevate ourselves, by affirming them to be erroneous; but our own consciences are judges on whose sentences we can cast no imputation. Against the opinions of others it is not difficult to render ourselves obdurate, by the recollection that it is of no consequence to us what they may be; but, notwithstanding every effort, the rebuke within goes deep into the heart. The voices of others who condemn us may be excluded from the ear, or are to be heard but for a moment; but the voice that condemns one's-self is uttered from the inmost recesses of the bosom, and never ceases to reverberate

through them. Much, indeed, may be done to stupify the conscience, or drown its reproofs; but it may be aroused from its deepest stupefaction, and be made to speak in a voice which, like thunder, shall be heard over all the din of a tumultuous world. Its rebuke may become—instances are known in which it has become—absolutely intolerable. Some men have wished themselves to be beasts in order to get rid of it; some have been driven by it to the confession of crimes to be immediately expiated with their lives; while others, in the vain hope, perhaps, of attaining repose, have violently plunged themselves into eternity. In these awful rebukes the voice of conscience is but the echo of that of a higher judge; and they clearly demonstrate how completely the Almighty Ruler has within his grasp even the unwilling subjects of his dominion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SUBJECT CONCLUDED.

In bringing this treatise to a conclusion, it will be proper, in the first place, briefly to retrace the course we have pursued.

Our subject has been Man's Responsibility. We opened it by dividing it into two parts; the former relating to the question whether God actually holds men responsible, the latter relating to the question whether he can be justified in doing so. On the former branch we made reference to the Sacred Scriptures as the only source of certain knowledge concerning it; on the latter we have entered into a course of lengthened investigation. For the purpose of pursuing with simplicity and distinctness the inquiry whether God can be justified in holding men responsible, we framed the general question, What are the proper elements of responsibility? and having specified these hypothetically, we have since been endeavouring to ascertain their actual existence in mankind. We have now to note down the conclusions at which we have arrived.

I have admitted that six elements are needful to constitute responsibility; namely, that action should be independent, intelligent, and free; that man should be competent to what is required of him, should act in view of sufficient motives, and experience an adequate impulse. I have given under each head appropriate explanations and proofs. How far these may have been satisfactory to the reader I, of course, can express no opinion; I have submitted them modestly, I hope, and I request for them a candid and serious consideration. For my own part I cannot but close as I began, by declaring my conviction that all the proper elements of responsibility exist in the nature and condition of mankind; and that, if God pleases to treat men according to their deeds, the grounds are manifest on which he may be justified. It would be a direct and forcible inference from this state of facts, that God will actually proceed in such a manner; since it is not to be conceived that he should have endowed his creatures with capacities of which he did not mean to require the exercise. But I shall lay no stress upon this inference, which some might treat lightly as a mere probability. My case is this. That conduct of all kinds will be recompensed hereafter is declared in God's Word: on this point the justice of God has, by an alleged necessity, been arrayed against his Word; I have endeavoured to destroy the pretext for this unnatural and (as I believe) unreal hostility, and to show that, if he shall arise to judgment, he will be clear when he arraigns, and just when he condemns. At this point I rest; and shall close with a few remarks addressed to readers of different character.

1. Should any persons have perused this volume who maintain an opinion dissimilar to the author's, and deny that any just grounds exist for man's being treated by his Maker according to his works, I beg their answer to three questions.

In the first place, I beg permission to ask them whether they are satisfied that their opinion is the result of an impartial judgment. I am not about to express a suspicion of any one's motives but my own, or to indulge, I hope, in any uncharitableness. I shall not deny that a person may honestly dispute the justice of man's responsibility to God; but I may safely affirm that the doctrine is strongly adapted to put every man's honesty to the test. A doctrine which

attaches such serious consequences to human actions, and enforces so much consideration and so many restraints, certainly cannot in itself be agreeable to mankind, but must be one of which the bulk of men would gladly rid themselves. Proof of its being false could not but be hailed with general delight, as extinguishing many nascent fears, and snapping many unwelcome bonds. The passions of men array themselves against the doctrine; and every one knows that our passions materially affect the exercise of our judgments. It is possible, and even probable, that some persons may lean towards the disbelief of responsibility, rather because they wish the doctrine to be false than because they see it to be so. I do not affirm that on this matter it behoves us to be suspicious one of another; but unquestionably it behoves us all to be suspicious of ourselves. The influence of our feelings on our judgment in this case is evidently likely to be on the wrong side; and if we should thus be led into error for want of an honest exercise of our understanding, we shall find ourselves not merely involved in ruin, but in ruin bitterly aggravated by self-reproach.

In the second place, I ask readers of this class whether their denial has consistent regard to both the branches of responsibility—to the recompense of actions that are good, as well as of those which are evil? We have said already that the notion of responsibility is not identical, and ought not to be confounded, with that of punishability; rewardability (the uncouth terms must be excused) being quite as essential and considerable a part of it. Now it is both possible and probable that a person rejecting the doctrine of responsibility may have his view confined to the former branch of it, and be resisting the thought that men can properly be punished, without any opposition to the correlative idea that they may properly be rewarded. Persons who think, or fain would think, that they deserve no censure when they do ill, may believe with some facility that they deserve praise when they do well. Should my reader be of this class, I beg him to observe that he occupies a false position. If there are any principles upon which actions may consistently be rewarded, upon the very same principles also they may consistently be punished. There is no essential difference between the two cases. The general idea in both is that of retribution, or of rendering to a man according to his works; good if his works

have been good, evil if his works have been evil. The circumstances under which the actions are performed being similar, if it be wrong to recompense evil actions with punishment, it must be wrong also to recompense good actions with reward. It is in both cases a simple act of retribution. If retribution be just, both are right; if retribution be unjust, both are wrong. It is one and the same principle which justifies both; and if the principle be controverted in one case, it cannot consistently be maintained in the other. Either both must be proper, or neither can be so. Retribution may be improper; but if it be, it must be as unjust to reward a man for good as it would be to punish him for evil. Whoever believes that he may be properly commended for one action, is doing utter violence to reason and common sense if he does not believe also that he may be properly blamed for another. I am here far from inventing a case. The idea of deserving commendation for well-doing lingers long in the minds of men, and is probably too tenacious of life ever to be totally extinguished in a single individual.

In the third place, I wish to ask a reader who denounces the doctrine of responsibility as unjust, whether he is prepared to bring the same charge against the actual ways of God to man. If he looks abroad, or even if he examines the course of his own life, he will see that, to a very considerable extent, God is treating men according to their works already. Sobriety, uprightness, prudence, diligence, and other habits which (whether correctly or not) we call virtuous, are so naturally and so generally connected with pleasing and beneficial results as to warrant the common expression that they have their reward; while intemperance, sensuality, idleness, rashness, and other habits which (whether correctly or not) we call vicious, are so naturally and so generally connected with painful and ruinous consequences that they also may be truly said to meet their punishment. A connexion so remarkable and so general cannot reasonably be deemed accidental. The only rational view of it is to regard it as designed by the governor of the world; and if we take this view of it, then it clearly follows that God is now dealing with men according to their works. Dealing with men according to their works, however, is the same thing as holding them responsible; it is precisely carrying out the doctrine of responsibility into practice, and can have no justice in it,

unless there be justice in the doctrine itself. To a reader who rejects the doctrine of responsibility, therefore, I exhibit this consequence, namely, that he brings by implication a charge of injustice against the actual government of God. I ask him whether he means to do this, and is prepared to abide by the accusation. The argument generally—I believe I may say invariably—held by persons of this class is of an opposite kind. The doctrine of responsibility cannot be true, they tell us, because God is just. I now turn their own argument upon themselves. I have just shown that the doctrine of responsibility is one upon which God is already acting; and therefore because God is just it must be true.

2. I am not forbidden to assume, that some readers of this volume who have in time past denied the responsibility of man, or, by the specious reasonings employed on this subject, have been led towards a denial of it, may now be more or less deeply pondering what they have read, with varying measures of present or prospective satisfaction. I trust they will see in this Treatise sufficient evidence that there are teachers of religion who endeavour to establish its doctrines upon intelligible grounds, and make a fearless appeal to the common sense of mankind. With whatever bitterness it may be customary in some quarters to speak of the dogmas of priests, readers who really love common sense may surely be expected to do justice to such an argument as has now been attempted. Let them answer the author first, whether, if the supposed elements of responsibility did exist, responsibility would be just. If it would not, let them say what else is required; if it would, let them fairly test the reasoning relating to the actual existence of the hypothetical elements, not in the spirit of controversy, and with a view to tear the discourse to pieces, but in the spirit of candid inquiry, and with a view to know and believe what is true.

Readers of the class I am now addressing may perhaps have been struck with a supposed peculiarity in the author's theological views. Some of them may never before have met with a religious teacher who did not hold, for example, that God had predestinated both the actions and the future condition of all men, with some other doctrines to be found in many books, and to be heard from many preachers. I wish them to understand that this peculiarity may be much less than it seems. There may be varieties of opinion among

professors of religion, and there may have been even books written, of which some persons have never heard. The author is quite aware that the theological views advanced in this Treatise are not held universally; but he can say with confidence that they are very far from being peculiar to himself. He knows that they are entertained widely, and he is happy in believing that they are destined to far more extensive prevalence. If this were not so, however, he has further to observe that current theology is not authoritative. It is absolutely without authority in right, and, with the author, it is without authority in fact. The Bible is the only standard of religious truth; and our only inquiry is, not what divines have preached and written, but what the Scripture lays down. It may be so—I neither affirm nor deny it here—that divines, I care not to what extent, have broached notions incompatible with a just responsibility. No matter: let these notions be discarded, and be like chaff before the wind. We think for ourselves; and we take up independently the question whether the doctrine of responsibility can be reconciled with the dictates of common sense and the Word of God. Let the reader treat us fairly on this ground. It is no answer to us to say that responsibility cannot be maintained on principles which we renounce; the fair and only question with us is whether it can be maintained on the principles which we hold. If it can, it will well deserve to be ascertained whether those principles are true.

3. Many of my readers, doubtless, believed in the doctrine of man's responsibility before they took up this book. They may or may not believe it more firmly now than before; but they have probably been struck with some things in the course of its perusal. Shall I conjecture their thoughts?

It may have been surprising to them to find a truth, which they may have deemed as simple and evident as it is fundamental, somewhat difficult of convincing demonstration, and mixed up with abstruse speculations. Is all this needful, perhaps, they have exclaimed, in order to be assured of the foundations of religious truth? Let me be permitted, in one word, to say to such readers, that in all cases the simplest truths are the most difficult of demonstration. Things may be abundantly plain in fact, which, nevertheless, if any one challenges you to the effort, it is by no means easy to prove.

Nothing can be more evident, for example, than our own existence, and the existence of the objects which surround us; yet to prove these facts by reasoning is a matter of extreme difficulty, even if it be possible at all. The truth is that an argument always requires premises, something admitted, out of which to construct your proof. It arises from this circumstance that, the simpler the truths are about which you reason, the more difficult reasoning becomes; there being in this case fewer premises, or admitted points, from which you can argue. Reasoning is capable of being always pushed back into difficulties, by taking the elements assumed in every argument, and challenging the proof of them. And as, in such a process, we should come gradually to truths so simple that the proof of them is difficult, so we should come at length to what are called ultimate truths, or truths beyond which we cannot go, and of which it is a hard matter to find any proof at all except that they demonstrate themselves to our perception. These must be assumed as facts without reasoning, because they agree with our perceptions and experience. Of this class in physical philosophy is the doctrine of the existence of the material universe, which, although no one by reasoning can prove it, no one ever doubted. Of the same class in metaphysical philosophy is the doctrine of a creature's free-agency, which also, if nobody can demonstrate it, everybody acts upon. The truth last mentioned is one which we have had to do with in the preceding pages; not voluntarily, however, mixing up plain matters with profound, but because our opponents constrain us to follow them where they go. I hope I have successfully shown that these abstruse speculations afford them no refuge from the demands of their Maker; but I wish also to satisfy readers who may be little conversant with them, that the difficulties which attach to the ultimate truths of religion attach to them in common with all ultimate truths in every department of human knowledge. Our fundamental notions (and these comprehend all the most important opinions we hold) are held in all cases, not by reasoning, but by perception and experience. And as it is with natural knowledge, just so it is with religious knowledge. We are not called upon to reason out its fundamental doctrines. We derive them from the Oracles of God, and rest on them with satisfaction because they agree with our experience. We are justified

and happy in doing so; nor is there any thing in the abstruse speculations into which some perverse disputers will both rush themselves, and drive the advocates of religious truth, which need for a moment disturb our repose.

The class of readers I am now addressing may have been struck further with the guarded theological views brought forward in this Treatise, and the discussions into which the author has been led with some of the friends of the Gospel, as well as with its enemies. They have been ready to say, perhaps, Are the doctrinal views so commonly held inconsistent with the fundamental tenet of man's responsibility? I need not mention here that small class of divines who, reckoning God to be the author of sin, reject the notion of responsibility altogether. Concerning that more numerous party who hold the sentiments commonly called Calvinistic, or more properly hyper-Calvinistic, I will venture, with sincere respect, to make one or two observations. I am very far from intending to intimate that they do not hold the responsibility of man; I believe they do hold it; or if not, they shall say so for themselves. The relation of their views to the doctrine of man's responsibility appears to me to be twofold: first, the doctrine cannot be demonstrated upon them. This I conceive to be matter of regret; but I regret much more to add, secondly, that upon their views I think it can be refuted. Good men of this class no doubt satisfy themselves by calling to remembrance that there are many Gospel mysteries, and they composedly put the doctrine of man's responsibility among them; while, not being obliged to meet antagonists in argument, their being liable to refutation comes to be no practical grievance. If this is no grievance to them, however, I am fully convinced that it is a source of mischief to others. When ministers of religion assert the responsibility of man upon grounds on which it can be demonstrated to be unjust, although there is no one by an answer to put the preacher to silence, there are hundreds of immortal beings to make a most pernicious use of his instructions. That he fails, and must fail, to make any deep or suitable impression upon their minds, is obvious, and this is bad enough; but it is worse that he furnishes them with the means of evading all his appeals. He arrays sound reason and common sense against Christianity, and makes the very pulpit an armoury full of weapons for resisting the Gospel. Under such a

ministry there is to the irreligious no longer any necessity for infidelity; the Gospel which they hear furnishes them all the excuses they want. And the minister of the Gospel, the man that should sound an alarm to the conscience and waken up every feeling of the heart, even he prophesies smooth things, and becomes the syren to charm them to perdition. I am constrained to regard sentiments of such a tendency as seriously erroneous; and I would not disseminate them for a thousand worlds. With whatever of respectful but earnest importunity the brethren referred to will permit me to employ on this matter without offence, I beseech them to consider whether they can acquit themselves of their obligations, either to God or man, in such a course. I confess that I regard the tone of the evangelical ministry in this respect as one of the most serious obstructions to its success, and one of the most fruitful sources of the practical irreligion and infidelity which distinguish our times.

4. I may not close this volume without a reference to the important practical bearing of the subject we have discussed. Some readers, perhaps, may now be led either to a renewed or a more serious conviction of their own responsibility. They see in a clearer light the truth that God, before whom they will have to appear hereafter, both may and will deal with them according to their conduct now. How solemn is the thought! We shall receive "the things that we have done, whether they be good or bad." Not one of our actions can be said to stand alone. Not one of them will be lost. There is a thread which connects them with a future condition, in which they will all, in their effects, be found again. They may be compared to seeds, every one of them containing the germ of that coming happiness and misery which will be generated and matured from them. And in how interesting a form will they be returned into our bosom, all of them transmuted into the approbation or disapprobation of our Maker, whose love and wrath are the living elements of everlasting bliss and woe! This is our seed-time, the harvest is at hand; and what a man soweth that shall he also reap. Oh! should we reap in another world the harvest, the only harvest which can grow from seeds of sin, how melancholy will be our occupation! What can the retribution be which must follow a life of worldly pursuit, of self-pleasing, of alienation from God? Can there

be any thing so vitally important to our future happiness as the friendship and lovingkindness of him that made us? Can there be any thing so dreadful to endure as the sense of his merited displeasure? Does not shrinking nature, as well as Scripture, testify that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"? Can his just wrath be resisted? Can it be sustained? If to yield ourselves to his service and glory be our duty, is it not our interest too? What is there in all the license of unbridled passions on earth that can compensate the future endurance of our Maker's frown? Nothing is of so much moment to us as his favour; and nothing of such weighty obligation or such urgent wisdom as to secure it. No consideration ought to affect us more deeply than this, that we have already forfeited it by disobedience. Nothing ought to inspire us with greater joy than to know that there is an opening for repentance and reconciliation. In the way of his own mercy, and by the atoning sacrifice of his Son, our offended Maker has opened the way for our return, and prepared for the forgiveness of sins. He sent his only-begotten Son to seek and to save that which was lost; and not only is he ready to pardon every transgression, but he condescends to entreat our acceptance of his friendship. What a marvellous position is this! They were not unrighteous commands which we have broken, but he is willing to pass by the breach of them. There has been no injustice in the system of responsibility under which we have become liable to punishment, yet he is willing to cancel that entire liability. We have cherished a spirit of resistance incapable alike of justification or excuse; but he proposes a restored friendship in which it shall be remembered no more. Surely, in the midst of such manifestations of his love we can find no reason to complain of him as severe. If we could perversely fight against his authority, his forgiving grace should instantly melt us into submission. It is enough to have provoked wrath, without adding to this the further guilt and infatuation of rejecting deliverance. Since there is mercy for all, why should not all embrace it? Who will perish gratuitously, and without cause? Who will necessitate punishment by a perverse refusal of pardon, while all heaven gazes mournfully on his choice, and when there would be "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"?

NOTE.

IS MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS BELIEF?

It is just thirty years ago since Henry, now Lord Brougham, then recently elected Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, pronounced in his Inaugural Discourse the following sentences:—

"As men will no longer suffer themselves to be led blindfold in ignorance, so they will no more yield to the vile principle of judging and treating their fellow-creatures, not according to the intrinsic merit of their actions, but according to the incidental and involuntary coincidence of their opinions. The great truth has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth, THAT MAN SHALL NO MORE RENDER AN ACCOUNT TO MAN FOR HIS BELIEF, OVER WHICH HE HAS HIMSELF NO CONTROL. Henceforward nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or blame any one for that which he can no more change than he can the hue of his skin or the height of his stature.*

It is needless, we hope, for us to say in how large a part of the sentiments here expressed we ourselves concur, and more especially in this—that man should not be called upon to render an account TO MAN for his belief. We may point out by the way, however, the evidence which the passage supplies that even the great lawyer himself who so solemnly enunciated this proposition was far from comprehending the true principle on which it rests. If the real reason why man should not be called upon to account to man for his belief is that he has no control over it, the correlative notion must be maintained, that for everything over which man has control he may justly be called to account by his fellow-man—a notion, assuredly, too wild to be gravely vindicated. Man's responsibility to man is clearly to be restricted to deeds by which the interest of his fellow-man may be affected. The real reason, however, why one man is not to account to another for his belief is, that freedom of thought is a prerogative conferred by the Creator, and that, consequently, man has no right of interference with it. The proposition that man has

* Brougham's Inaugural Discourses, p. 47. April 6th, 1825.

no control over his belief affects, not his responsibility to man, to which it has no relation, but his responsibility to God; and, as a general proposition, it is of immense importance, both theoretical and practical.

The chief use, probably, which Mr. Brougham was disposed to make of the axiom he had thus laid down, was to discourage and put an end to those prosecutions for opinion, or the free expression of opinion, by which the English courts of law were at that period disgraced; but a much more extended and important use of it has been, and is continually, made by the advocates of infidelity at large. Its effect is to shelter unbelief of every grade from moral blame, man having no control over his belief, which is asserted to be as independent of his will as the hue of his skin or the height of his stature. In this view we intend at present to contemplate it; and we propose to offer a few remarks by which, on the one hand, its partial truth may be defined, and, on the other, its partial falsehood may be made manifest.

The proposition before us is that man is not responsible to God for his belief, because he has no control over it. Some things are admitted here, for which, consequently, we shall not have to contend. Man's responsibility to God is not itself a fiction; for some things, at least, he is responsible to his Maker. And these things are not unsatisfactorily defined, they are things over which he has control. We wish no more. Let things over which man has no control be held also to be things for which he is not responsible. The stress of the argument is thus transferred from the first to the second part of the proposition, the question under discussion being whether or not man has control over his belief; and according to the way in which this is decided, all parties will be ready to determine the question whether man is, or is not, responsible for his belief.

We do no injustice, we believe, to those who uphold the sentiment that man has no control over his belief, when we say that they regard human beliefs as the result either, first, of circumstances; or, secondly, of evidence: both of these determining the understanding wholly independently of the human will. Now we are quite ready to allow much to the influence of these causes. Undoubtedly, to a great extent people imbibe opinions from those around them, and hold them because others do; while to a great extent also, by more inquiring minds, beliefs are received and held upon evidence, and upon evidence in many cases absolutely challenging assent. Our only question would be in relation to a small adverb by which the proposition is made universal, and whether the beliefs and opinions of mankind are arrived at in a manner *wholly* independent of the human will. We ask whether there be any portion of them in the production of which FEELING may have had a share.

If upon inquiry such a portion is found, with respect to these, since our feelings are under our control, responsibility may clearly be maintained.

In the first place, then, for the influence of circumstances. It is impossible to notice the method in which the human being comes into life, without perceiving the vastness of this influence. The child derives all his knowledge from the parent, and naturally imbibes his opinions; while society in a larger sense gradually succeeds to the position and influence of the parent. Hence the general sameness which characterizes successive generations of men, in the several conditions, social, ecclesiastical, and political, in which they are found. But the influence of circumstances may be great without being irresistible; and that it is not irresistible may be made to appear, we think, by such considerations as these.

1. The opinions of mankind as we now contemplate them do not correspond with *all* the circumstances which are adapted to modify them. Prominent among these circumstances, indeed, are those of domestic and social life, and these obviously enough reflect themselves in prevailing popular opinions; but these are not *all* the circumstances adapted to modify the opinions of mankind. Every human being, as his faculties develop themselves, opens his eyes upon marvellous exhibitions of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, at once suggestive to the understanding and quickening to the affections; but the appeal is, generally speaking, without response. While surrounded with works of God which in ten thousand forms show forth his glory, mankind exhibit towards him neither reverence nor gratitude. Why is this? Assuredly, not because of the feebleness or unintelligibility of the appeal made to them, but, as the apostle teaches us, because men "do not like to retain God in their knowledge." Rom. i. 20, 21.

To take another example of the same case. A large portion of mankind are in possession of a divine revelation, in which the character and ways of God are portrayed with surpassing vividness and beauty. Nothing can exceed, either the directness and simplicity on the one hand, or the force and pathos on the other, with which this appeal is made both to the understanding and the heart; but what is its effect? Certainly, if not absolutely null, very far from universal, or even extensive. And why is this? Clearly, not from want of power, but from want of welcome. It is unacceptable to man's heart, and therefore is uninfluential. "Light is come into the world, but men have loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19.

It is thus, we think, obvious that the opinions of mankind at large reflect the influence of only *some* of the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and not that of the whole of them; and the inference directly follows that the influence of circum-

stances on opinion is not irresistible, since here are some circumstances the influence of which is actually resisted. There is clearly exercised a power of control and selection; and a power of selection the more remarkable, because the circumstances which are allowed to prevail are in themselves the more feeble, while those which are resisted are in themselves unspeakably the more powerful.

2. The operation of circumstances on opinion is by no means uniform. Where circumstances are the same the impression is not in all cases alike. There are in all regions more or less extensive diversities of opinion, and these are more considerable in proportion to the degree in which the activity of the mind has been excited. We need not do more than refer to the various sects among pagan philosophers, together with the endless speculations and religious differences which present themselves to us in every direction. Whence are all these? And how could they be, if the influence of circumstances on human opinion were decisive and irresistible? There is undeniably some power in man which does resist and control them. There is, on the one hand, a constitutional aptitude and tendency to certain views which gives an inclination towards the adoption of them, and gains for them a ready preference over others; while, on the other hand, there is an endless diversity in the degrees of attention, inquiry, penetration, and candour, which, in the formation of their opinions, men bring into exercise. Hence some men, in spite of circumstances, become wise; and other men, equally in spite of circumstances, become fools.

3. Circumstances themselves are a shifting element in human condition. They are undergoing incessant modifications, both on a large and a small scale. And although a large proportion of these changes are produced by causes over which men have no control, this is far from being characteristic of them all. There are many changes which man himself makes. His various impulses and modes of life, his virtues and his vices, perpetually affect his health, his property, his domestic and social position. His views alter; then his purposes and aims, his plans and operations alter; and he gradually effects a change, and ultimately a great change, in his circumstances. It may, perhaps, with as much justice be said that man makes his circumstances, as that circumstances make man. And the changes of opinion in which such changes in the circumstances of mankind originate are, for the most part, not from without, but from within—in many cases they are palpably so—the result of investigation and discovery, or of newly felt wants and desires; and they demonstrate the existence of a source of opinion which is independent of circumstances, and confers a superiority over them.

The considerations we have thus adduced show, we think, that

the influence of circumstances on human beliefs, although great, is by no means absolute. It is certain that it may be resisted because in many cases it is resisted; it prevails, indeed, only in proportion to the slumber of the human mind, in which there lies, more or less latent or wakeful, a power of far greater intensity.

Secondly, let us proceed now to the allegation that such of our beliefs as are not received under the influence of circumstances are due to the force of evidence, such evidence producing its effect on the understanding necessarily, and independently of the will.

Now be it here premised that we are perfectly aware that the reception of truth, or of any proposition as true, is not a matter of will directly; it is doubtless the direct and appropriate act of the understanding, by which, in the order of the human powers, evidence is appreciated, and a conclusion arrived at. We are also ready to admit, that in some departments of human knowledge, there is no scope at all for even the indirect exercise of the will; as, for example, in the case of axiomatic and mathematical truths. All that we propose to maintain is, that, in some departments of knowledge, there is a reciprocal action of the powers of the mind—that is to say, not only an action of the understanding on the feelings, but an action also of the feelings on the understanding. In so far our feelings affect our beliefs, and our opinions are matters of will. In order to make good the general principle which we have here laid down, we shall point out several modes in which our feelings may affect the exercise of the understanding.

1. Our feelings may affect the degree of attention we pay to evidence. It is obviously of little consequence how clear or convincing the evidence adduced on any subject may be, if it be addressed to an inattentive person. Now attention is a voluntary state, and supposes an effort which is directly the result of the will. Attention is also susceptible of various degrees, and these are immediately determined by the feelings excited towards the subject presented to us. If the matter be one in which we feel a lively interest, and in which conclusive proof on either side would gratify us, our ear is immediately open, and we give diligent heed to the evidence brought forward; if, on the contrary, the matter be one to which we are indifferent, or more than indifferent, and the conclusion to be arrived at one to which we would much rather not be brought, the readiness with which we attend to the evidence is diminished accordingly. "I can prove your ruin to you clearly," says A to B. "Can you, my dear fellow," replies B to A; "but I would rather not know it. Postpone the proof till to-morrow: to-day let us drink and be merry."

2. Our feelings may affect the degree of weight we attach to

evidence. It is proverbial that we are easily convinced of what we wish to be true. The circumstance that an argument tells in our favour predisposes us to think favourably of it, while we look more narrowly into one that carries an adverse appearance. Our interest quickly biases our logic; and we are much slower in coming to a conviction which calls upon us for an unwelcome exertion or a costly sacrifice, than to one which sanctions our holding a lucrative position or leads to our advancement. To the just appreciation of evidence nothing is more essential than a candid mind; but candour, like attention, is itself a voluntary state, and implies an effort to hold the understanding free from the disturbing influences which beset it on every side. He that would really arrive at truth has to exercise on himself no inconsiderable discipline, and to guard with incessant jealousy against the bias which feelings, perhaps slight and scarcely traceable, may give to his conclusions.

3. Our feelings may disturb the exercise of our understanding. Every one knows how necessary a certain degree of serenity is to the proper consideration of a subject, and how impossible it is to arrive at a just conclusion in a highly excited state of mind, whether by grief or anger, by hope or fear. In such a state of feeling we are conscious that we cannot see things as they really are. One object becomes too prominent, and absorbs all our attention, while others, adapted to qualify the impression it makes, are driven into the background and bereft of their proper influence. Hence a man in a passion is proverbially unfit to estimate the merits of his quarrel; and hence also we often feel it right for ourselves, or may be counselled by others, to postpone the consideration of a subject till we are more cool, and can look at it with greater calmness.

4. Our feelings may sometimes become a substitute for evidence, supplying the place of it where it is not, and destroying the force of it where it is. This is strongly illustrated in cases of personal partiality and dislike. We know that love creates the charms it feeds on, and it is almost equally manifest that enmity clothes its object with unreal faults. Every intermediate shade of kindly or of hostile feeling has its proportionate effect. We more easily ascribe virtues, or more readily believe ascriptions of them, to persons who have an interest in our affections; while we find it in a corresponding degree hard to attribute good qualities to persons to whom we are averse. In these, and in many similar instances, the mind is closed by our state of feeling to the access of evidence on one side, while our feeling itself supplies the lack of evidence on the other.

5. Our feelings may affect our conclusions by force of habit. We more easily think as we have been accustomed to think, and our antecedent opinions form, as it were, ruts, more or less deep, for the course of our subsequent thoughts. Hence the power of

what is familiarily called prejudice, or pre-judgment—that is, of opinions formed beforehand on matters which come under discussion, and presenting either obstacles or facilities, as the case may be, to the reception of a given conclusion. This force of habit, again, is a matter of feeling, and as such it materially modifies the exercise of the understanding. It gives force to conventional and popular beliefs, and tends to require an excess—an unreasonable amount—of evidence for the support of any conclusion which may be adverse to them, or even in advance of them.

6. Our feelings may in some cases directly impede the exercise of our understanding. For this nothing is more necessary than a good degree of mental independence, and a readiness to think for one's self as a matter of right and high prerogative not to be surrendered; but this is far from being universally possessed. Many persons are characterized by a feeble acquiescence in prevailing beliefs, of whatever kind; while others have so strong a tendency to acknowledge and bow to authority, that they can scarcely adopt any opinion without it, or contrary to it. In such cases the understanding is partially paralyzed, and stripped of its natural vigour; or put in fetters, and obliged to work in chains. In such a state of feeling no kind of evidence has its proper power.

7. Our feelings, even when they do not affect the speculative results arrived at, may affect the practical force of them. It is one thing for a point to be proved to our conviction, and another for it to become to us as if it were proved. The opinion that prevailingly influences us will often be found to be that which best agrees with our inclinations; and thus our feelings, if they do not extinguish the light of the understanding, repudiate its authority, and rob it of its power. It may be said, indeed, that, of two opinions one more welcome to us than the other, the more welcome one will be practically our belief, although we know it to be false. The unwelcome belief, although we are convinced that it is true, will pass out of memory and be forgotten, while the other will linger in our warm affections, and usurp the place of truth.

We have thus curiously indicated some of the ways in which the exercise of the understanding may be affected, and the force of evidence may be modified, by the feelings. We may now remark, that the general fact of the influence of the feelings on the understanding is manifest in the infinite variety of judgments formed by means of the same evidence. In relation to a large part of human knowledge, and particularly that part which affects our duty and well-being, the same evidence is presented to all. To all alike God speaks by his works and by his word; but what wonderful differences are found in the hearing of his voice! To some he seems to speak in tones of majesty; to others in a scarcely audible whisper; while to a third class his voice has no

significancy at all. This is surely in no way to be accounted for but by the condition of the ear, that is, of the hearer's mind. The evidence being one and the same, and the human understanding one and the same, the resulting conclusions and convictions would also be one and the same did not some cause interfere with either the one or the other. Now the evidence cannot be tampered with, the understanding may; and here is, doubtless, man's heart employed in tampering with it. Thus are the feelings of men affecting the exercise of their understandings, and the formation of their beliefs.

We surely need not carry the illustration of this point further. The question is one both of consciousness and observation, and on both grounds we conceive it must be plain to any person that our opinions are, at least in some cases and in some degree, influenced by our feelings. It is no discredit to human nature to say so. It is no feature of corruption, or result of the fall; it is doubtless the primary and normal condition of our race. And it is an arrangement at once of infinite wisdom and beauty, lying at the basis, certainly, of some of the grandest aspects of the divine administration, and constituting the source of the most important and interesting phenomena of human life.

Our argument now draws to its conclusion. Having shown that the exercise of the understanding is to some degree influenced by the feelings, we meet Lord Brougham's *dictum* that man has no control over his beliefs with a direct denial. Over his feelings man has control: and, consequently, he has control over his beliefs as far as they are influenced by his feelings. And in so far—we care for no more—in so far he is responsible for them. In this respect a man's beliefs hold a very different position from "the hue of his skin and the height of his stature," with which Lord Brougham has most inconsiderately and unjustly compared them. Man cannot but be responsible for his beliefs in so far as they may have resulted from a want of attention, or from a want of candour; in so far as they may have resulted from prejudice or self-love; in so far, in one word, as they represent feelings of any kind under the influence of which they have been formed.

We have said that we care for no more. If the ground we have occupied may seem to be narrow, we say advisedly it is enough. The most important application of the principle we have laid down is, undoubtedly, to man's moral position, his duty, and his prospects; and all the truths that relate to these are established by evidences the appreciation and reception of which are pre-eminently liable to be influenced by the feelings. The character and word of God, the duty and usefulness of man, the importance and method of salvation—all these are topics which come home to the heart, and waken its deepest sensibilities. What attention shall be paid to these topics, what force

shall be allowed to the proofs which substantiate them, or what practical influence if substantiated, are all questions of feeling, and of feeling by which the resulting beliefs cannot but be greaty modified. Nothing need hinder us from making the assertion, therefore, that man is responsible for his belief, or his unbelief, of the Gospel; that is to say, for treating the Bible, with its contents and evidences, with due attention and candour, with simplicity and independence of mind.

If an unbeliever asserts that he has done so, and requires us to prove the contrary, he challenges us to a course on which we shall not enter. We judge no man. It is neither our province nor our inclination to do so. We only say that it will be well for him hereafter if his assertion be found to be true. This, however, is plain—the Bible affords no sanction to any such notion. The principle laid down there is that a candid treatment of the Gospel will ensure its reception. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." John vii. 17. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." John iii. 19.

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